

**A Conspiracy of the Subconscious: Yeats, Crowley, Pound, Graves and the  
Esoteric Tradition.**

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## Abstract

The influence of the occult has often been regarded as an oddity in W. B. Yeats's poetry, and a symptom of the poet's desire to create a mythology within which his poetry could operate in defiance of the actualities of the modern world. Recent work on Pound, however, has shown that his work too is permeated by occult influences, and this thesis attempts to chart the exact nature of the occult tradition within which they--as well as Aleister Crowley and Robert Graves--were operating. It identifies a particular tradition--the chthonic esoteric tradition--to which all of these writers subscribed, shows the ways in which that tradition is related to pre-Christian sources in a matriarchal religion which, through secret societies, consistently opposed the patriarchal god of the solar tradition that became established as Christian orthodoxy.

All four of the writers examined here produced manifestos intended to explain the chthonic esoteric tradition, manifestos written out of a deep study of the history of religion and mythology but written in states of mind in which they felt they were having the truth of the universe dictated to them from without. These manifestos were apocalyptic works, written in expectation of a new age and a new divinity which would transform civilization and initiate a new world order. The thesis demonstrates the continuity of a long tradition of esoteric thought which has had a particular appeal to poets and shows the centrality of this thought to the development of otherwise widely differing modern poets. Furthermore, it argues that for all of these writers poetry was not simply metaphorically but in actuality a process of initiation into ancient mysteries. The first chapter traces the occult tradition through the centuries; demonstrates the dual aspect of the esoteric tradition (chthonic and solar); comments on the theme of secret history; and demonstrates how the chthonic esoteric tradition influenced the thought of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves.

The second chapter examines the esoteric poetry and prose of Yeats and Crowley and shows that Yeats and Crowley, inspired by the ideology of the chthonic esoteric tradition, sought to propagate the advent of a new divinity, the child of the mother alone that would stress the neglected feminine aspects of the human psyche and bring unity of being.

The third chapter examines Pound's initiatory and apocalyptic work The Cantos, as well as his other esoteric prose and poetry, and demonstrates that he, like Yeats, Crowley, and Graves, believed in the advent of a new era that would bring back the glory of poetic inspiration and the religion of the Great-Goddess.

The fourth chapter reveals Graves's adherence to the religion of the Great-Goddess and demonstrates that Graves's Black Goddess is the product of the assimilation of the opposites which develops from an understanding of the importance of the feminine principle.

The fifth chapter demonstrates Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves's ambition to create a new occult poetic form, one suited to the requirements of the new age and religion. The four poets using a series of charged talismanic images or symbols as well as evocative rhythm, attempted to induce a magical effect that would penetrate the reader's subconscious and activate the reader's imagination, so that the reader could remember the hidden layers of his/her soul and recognise the hidden god within.

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the research reported therein has been conducted by myself.



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## Introduction

In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Eliot attacks the "metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" (19) and asserts that "the poet has not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (20). In other words, according to Eliot, the artist, in order to create a work of art, must deny the existence of his inner world and reduce his art to a scientific experiment, since for Eliot "the poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together" (19).

But this scientific conception of artistic creation does not constitute the only current that directed the tide of twentieth century poetry. In contrast to Eliot, the poets under consideration in this thesis--Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves--maintain that the "metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" is a prerequisite for the creation of great poetry, and that unity can only be achieved by bringing to light the suppressed world of the subconscious, which constitutes the fundamental source of poetic inspiration or intuition. Furthermore, the "substantial unity of the soul", or Yeats's "unity of being", presupposes a thorough investigation into the depths of the human psyche, an investigation that has preoccupied primarily the initiates of the esoteric tradition. The esoteric tradition, however, is misunderstood by many literary critics who, unable to fathom its indispensability to the study of late nineteenth and twentieth century poetry, consider it a miasma and an exogenous factor in literary criticism.

The nineteenth century witnessed an overflowing of an occult current that carried away the disheartened minds of the artistic society. The conspiratorial existence of secret societies marks the thought and style of most early twentieth century poets. Yeats wonders in his autobiography (1926) whether "modern



civilisation [was] a conspiracy of the sub-conscious"<sup>1</sup> (327); Kazantzakis, in his visionary The Saviors of God (1927), assumes the role of a "conspirator" and strives to communicate to his comrades "in time a simple word . . . a password" (54).

Karl Popper comments in Conjectures and Refutations that "the conspiracy theory of society . . . comes from abandoning God and then asking: 'who is in his place?'" (123). Indeed, the loss of God in the nineteenth century created a spiritual abyss that had to be bridged by a faith substantial enough to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people. As many critics have recognised, poets were inspired to develop a new religion that would stress its adherence not to an A-gnostic, abstract deity, but to a Gnostic one that would reside in the human soul and form its eternal element.

Humanity's eternal element could be evoked by poetry and, therefore, the poet became legitimately the minister or apostle of the new creed. As poet-priests of a new religion, Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves exhibited an experimental form of poetry that satisfied the requirements of the new age and religion. The form of the new poetry, reflecting the Einsteinian perception of the universe, becomes relative. The poet, the reader, and the work of art can no longer be regarded separately, but constitute a dynamic whole. The new poetry abandons the abstract and strict two-dimensional form of the old primary period and achieves a flexible and loose three-dimensional form in which the work of art becomes a living entity, a process or a catalyst which reveals or communicates the subjective world of the artist to the reader, shaping thus the latter's inner world. In the new age, the poet becomes a priest-

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<sup>1</sup>The statement conveys a metaphorical meaning denoting the change of emphasis from the primary conscious state (masculine principle) to the antithetical sub-conscious (feminine principle). The aim of this symbolic conspiracy is the product of the 'sacred marriage' between the opposites, that is, Jung's child-god archetype, Crowley's crowned and conquering child, Yeats's new divinity or turbulent child of the altar, Pound's child of the goddess Aphrodite brought fourth at the last stage of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Graves's child of the waning moon, Lucifer, or child of the mother alone.



magician or mage, that is, an image-maker, "the finder and founder of images" (Kenneth & Steffi Grant, The Hidden Lore 28); through a series of charged talismanic images or symbols, the poet attempts to penetrate the reader's subconscious, activate the reader's imagination, and open the door of memory in the reader's psyche, so that the reader can remember the hidden layers of his/her soul, which leads to the recognition of the hidden god within. Thus, the poet-priest-magician of the new age, with a loose 'formless' form of poetry, and with a series of charged images and symbols, succeeds in reaching the reader's inner world, opening his/her gates of memory, and communicating with his/her shadow. The poet transforms the reader's subjective world or, in other words, initiates the reader into a new understanding. Yeats, in A Vision, declares that his work will proclaim "a new divinity" (27); in The Symbolism of Poetry, he considers the priest of the primary Christian religion the poet's "shadow" (195). Rimbaud, significantly, defines the poet as the "thief of fire" or Promethean figure, designating thus the relationship between the poet and humanity. A significant number of poets in the late nineteenth century, cognizant of living in a "time of troubles",<sup>2</sup> turned away from the chaos of their social order to the reality of their inner psychic world. In other words, they underwent a process of "withdrawal and return"<sup>3</sup>. Identifying themselves with Prometheus or the rebel Satan, they became conspirators or ministers of new creeds, seeking to resurrect and rekindle the half-forgotten and forbidden knowledge and transmit it to humanity. The archives of this forbidden and aristocratic knowledge were kept within the strongholds of secret societies. Many poets of this period (and particularly those under examination

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<sup>2</sup>A term coined by Arnold Toynbee in A Study of History denoting the state of unrest and decline that precedes the fall of a civilization.

<sup>3</sup>According to Toynbee "the . . . withdrawal make[s] it possible for the personality to realize individual potentialities which might have remained in abeyance if the individual in whom they were immanent had not been released for a moment from his social toils and trammels. The withdrawal is an opportunity . . . for the anchorite's transfiguration . . . but . . . this transfiguration can have no purpose, and perhaps even no meaning, except as a prelude to the return of the transfigured personality into the social milieu out of which he has originally come" (A Study of History, vol. 3, 248).



in this thesis) were inspired by the ideology that runs through the channels of secret societies, and sought to communicate this ideology to humanity. According to this ideology, the patriarchal religion of Christianity has degenerated to such an extent that it can no longer satisfy the religious instincts of the people, that the time has come for the old gods, nurtured in the covens of the esoteric tradition, to dominate once more the religious consciousness of the people.

The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate to the reader that late-nineteenth and twentieth century writers, such as Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves were driven by a subconscious urge to bring forth a poetic manifesto that would initiate or teach humanity an esoteric creed based on a belief in humanity's eternal principle and in the neglected feminine aspect of the human soul. Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, Pound's The Cantos, and Graves's The White Goddess, are apocalyptic works, manifestos which proclaim the coming of a new faith which will overthrow the old religious and social orders and initiate a new world order and a new divinity based on the old religion of the Great Goddess, a religion that will exalt the long suppressed feminine principle or child of the goddess alone. In other words, the objective of this thesis is not to provide a thorough critical analysis of the poetry of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, but to deal with the history of ideas and to investigate the various ways in which the conspiracy of the subconscious or esoteric tradition has influenced the thought of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, and in general to reveal the significant role that the occult has played in the shaping of late nineteenth and twentieth century poetry. The fact that Yeats, Crowley, and Graves believed that they had received their manifestos in a supernatural way justifies Yeats's conjecture that modern history is indeed a conspiracy of the subconscious. The four poets examined in this thesis represent a focus of influence of the esoteric tradition, which I suspect to be much wider in modern poetry. The argument in this thesis provides the foundation for a broader analysis of the influence of the esoteric tradition to modern poetry in general.



The first chapter briefly traces the occult tradition and its ideology through the centuries; demonstrates the dual aspect of the esoteric tradition (chthonic and solar); and discusses the role of the Church mythologists in the shaping of the religious and political history in the Christian Western world. Furthermore, it comments on the theme of secret history and demonstrates how the chthonic esoteric tradition influenced the thought of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves.

The second chapter examines the esoteric opuses of Yeats and Crowley and provides proof that both poets, inspired by the ideology of the chthonic esoteric tradition to which they had access through their membership in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, sought to propagate through their poetry and prose the advent of a new divinity, the child of the mother alone, that would stress the neglected feminine characteristics of the human psyche and bring unity of being.

The third chapter concentrates on Pound's quest for unity of being, and examines his experimental work, The Cantos, as well as his other esoteric poetry and prose to prove that he, like Yeats, Crowley, and Graves, believed in the advent of a new era that would bring back the glory of poetic inspiration and the religion of the Great Goddess. The pioneering works of Surette (The Light from Eleusis and The Birth of Modernism) and Tryphonopoulos (The Celestial Tradition) prove Pound's connection to the esoteric tradition, as well as Pound's relation to the apocalyptic spirit of the late nineteenth century. Both critics point to the initiatory and revelatory character of The Cantos, and also acknowledge the significance of the Eleusinian Mysteries in the shaping of Pound's religious metaphysics. Surette and Tryphonopoulos, however, underestimate the cosmic character of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which they consider only of a local character and importance, and thus they underestimate its impact on Pound, who as this study suggests was so convinced that the ancient European religion of the Great Goddess was the only solution to the spiritual impasse of the modern world, that he dedicated his life to propagating its teachings.

The fourth chapter examines the impact of the occult tradition on Graves's work. More specifically, it examines Graves's conviction that the fragmentation of the modern character and world came about as a result of humanity's departure from the old tradition of the Great Goddess. Graves's solution is the return of the "Lady of the House" or White Goddess, who represents poetic inspiration or the feminine aspect of the human soul. The return of the White Goddess inaugurates a new state of consciousness symbolized by the Black Goddess. It seems that in this new frame of mind, the conscious state becomes aware of the importance of the subconscious. The Black Goddess is the counterpart to Yeats's unity of being, a product of the assimilation of the opposites, which comes out of an understanding of the importance of the feminine principle.

The fifth chapter examines the esoteric and religious character of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves's poetry and demonstrates their aspiration to create a new occult poetic form that would fit the requirements of the new age and religion. It particularly elucidates their conviction that the poem forms a gate to the subconscious, a catalyst which enables the poet and the reader to experience an exalted state of consciousness that leads to the activation of magical memory and to the recognition of the hidden god within.



## Chapter 1

### The Forgotten Gnosis

In Per Amica Silentia Lunae, Yeats claims that the true poet has to know the real and must be a seer of reality (504). To become a seer of reality Yeats openly acknowledged the significance of the esoteric-occult tradition<sup>1</sup> (Autobiographies 72).

Crowley maintained that his whole body of esoteric beliefs derived from the teachings of the mysterious White Brotherhood,<sup>2</sup> which during his time was a mouthpiece for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society, and that part of his mission was to "preserve the Sacred Tradition, so that a new Renaissance might in due season rekindle the hidden Light" (Magick Without Tears 457).

Thanks to recent studies by Leon Surette and Demetres Tryphonopoulos, Pound's involvement in the occult is now well documented and established. Pound believed that alongside mainstream history ran "for 2000 or more years . . . the celestial tradition" (Guide to Kulchur 222), that is, the chthonic esoteric tradition. The celestial tradition is otherwise called by Pound the conspiracy of intelligence (Guide to Kulchur 263), as well as the cult of Amor or Eleusis (Selected Prose 50). Concerning Pound's The Cantos, Surette asserts that they are "examples of direct knowledge or vision" (The Birth of Modernism 26). Like Yeats's apocalyptic work, A Vision, and Crowley's The Book of the Law, the mission of The Cantos, according to

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<sup>1</sup>This chapter considers only the philosophical facets of the Western esoteric tradition, and not its more apocryphal and ambivalent claims related to theurgy, ritual magic, and alleged communications with extraterrestrial entities.

<sup>2</sup>According to Kenneth Grant, Crowley's student and Outer Head of the O.T.O in England, the Brotherhood "numbered among its openly unavowed representatives such authorities as Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Eliphas Levi, Fred Hockley, Kenneth Mackenzie, Gerald Massey, Fabre d' Olivet and others" (Magical Revival 9). For more information see "An Account of A A " in Equinox Vol. I, No 1., where Crowley stresses the conspiratorial character of the Brotherhood, his Confessions, as well as Grant's two Typhonian trilogies where the history of the Brotherhood is treated exhaustively.



Surette, is to declare "the new age . . . impatiently awaited by the whole nineteenth century" (The Birth of Modernism 36). Moreover, I assert that the mission of The Cantos is to narrate aspects of the history of this conspiracy of intelligence and to reinstate the feminine principle in the human consciousness. Robert Graves's The White Goddess, in a similar eschatological manner, purports to extol the suppressed cult of the Mother-Goddess over current patriarchal religions.

A common denominator among Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves is that they claimed to have had epiphanies. In one way or another, the sacred was revealed to them, that is, they achieved direct access to the noumenal world, enabling them to compose manifestos that disclosed ancient esoteric-occult teachings, which in turn had as their purpose the raising of humanity's spiritual consciousness. More specifically, the manifestos of these poets attack the conventional beliefs of the "Church mythologists",<sup>3</sup> and attempt to formulate or revive a creed, perpetuated in the esoteric-occult tradition, that emphasizes the significance of the feminine principle over the masculine as well as the notion of the "Thios Anthropos" or "Divine Human Being", the son of the Gnostic god Anthropos, that is, the Gnostic Christ, who is androgynous and resides in the human soul or subconscious.

The origin of the esoteric-occult tradition is obscure and debatable. Surette, in The Birth of Modernism, asserts that "Occultism's claim to belong to a tradition much older than Christianity cannot be taken seriously" (49). Tryphonopoulos agrees with Surette's assessment, adding accurately that "the intellectual content of the occult is almost all derived from the Hellenistic period" (The Celestial Tradition 25). However, if we accept that during the early Christian period the esoteric-occult tradition found expression in early Christianity, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and

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<sup>3</sup>The phrase was coined by Thomas Paine in The Age of Reason (1793), and refers to those who formulated the Christian dogma disregarding the esoteric tradition which preceded it and shaped it.



Neoplatonism; and if we accept Gnosticism<sup>4</sup> not as a Christian heresy, but as an offshoot of the esoteric-occult tradition, as scholars have proven, then we must acknowledge the existence of an uninterrupted esoteric-occult tradition through the ages, and we must give credence to occultists' claim of an uninterrupted pre-Christian lineage.

Surette's main argument in The Birth of Modernism is that the roots of modernism lie deep in the occult, that is, in the esoteric tradition. In my endeavour to outline the history of the esoteric tradition in order to establish the impact which it had on Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, I realized that its doctrines constituted a homogenous body in appearance only, while in reality, they were disseminated mainly by two inimical factions. I use the term "chthonic esoteric tradition" to refer to the esoteric body of initiates who remained faithful to the fundamental body of the esoteric tradition as it was before the split in human consciousness, that is, to the philosophy and state of consciousness symbolized by the Mother-Goddess. The chthonic esoteric tradition is mainly associated with the feminine principle and is represented in Yeats's thought by the antithetical principle. Because of the split in

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<sup>4</sup>"Gnosticism" derives from the Greek word "gnosis" or "knowledge". For Gnostics, gnosis did not represent the body of information received by rational analysis, but the knowledge acquired by mystical illumination through initiatory revelation. Gnosticism constitutes, in a way, the inner philosophical body of the esoteric tradition. At about the first century, Gnosticism clashed with its solar fraction of Christianity (as formulated by Paul) and the conflict officially ended at about the third century with the triumph of patriarchal Christianity. Gnosticism's main exponents during these three centuries of conflict were Simon Magus, Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion. Primary sources about Gnosticism provide the Church fathers Irenaeus and Hippolytus in Against Haereses and Philosophoumena, respectively. Gnosticism's occult ties with the Oriental and Hellenic mystery cults have long been established by various scholars, such as Richard Reitzenstein, Edwin Hatch, Gerald Massey, G. R. S. Mead, Carl Jung and others. Frederick Grant, in his introduction to Hatch's The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity, asserts that Gnosticism definitely had a pagan character similar to that of the Oriental and Hellenic mysteries, and that its sources are "much older than Christianity and reflect a conglomerate of syncretistic type of religious thought which was characteristic of the Hellenistic-Roman world in the age of syncretism. . . . The Gnosticism we know was thoroughly Greek" (viii).



human consciousness, marked by the advent of the patriarchal religions, the main body of the esoteric tradition changed and acquired a solar character since it accepted the new principles and philosophy dictated by the patriarchal religions. Unlike the fiery, flexible, artistic disposition of the chthonic tradition, the spirit of the solar tradition is typified by rigidity, technocracy, and conformity to the rational analytical powers of the human brain.

Moreover, apart from the existence of the solar and chthonic tradition, I realized that in the Christian western world there existed "Church Mythologists" who, having no access to the teachings of the esoteric tradition (either chthonic or solar), interpreted literally the metaphysical and mythological doctrines which constituted solar Christianity. Thus, in the Christian western world, the esoteric tradition no longer forms a unified body and, most importantly, its teachings (both solar and chthonic) do not coincide with those of the external religion.

My view is that the esoteric-occult tradition commenced with the development of religious feeling in human beings, which is related primarily to the concept of time.<sup>5</sup> The occult was probably an attempt to express the ineffable unity observed in physical phenomena as well as the awe and ecstasy early humans felt when surrounded and intoxicated by the marvels of nature. In its early evolutionary phase, humanity developed a sense of inner unity which matured with human beings' observation of the basic scheme of birth, death, and rebirth (expressed later in the mystery cults) discerned in the astronomical phenomena related to the sun and moon and in the cyclical process of nature. The esoteric-occult tradition probably originated from humanity's yearning to enunciate this strange, ineffable feeling of unity experienced within, and which was inevitably identified with the causeless archetypal logos or principle, that is, the principle that cannot be communicated through words, but can only be felt.

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<sup>5</sup>See Appendix on Occult Hermeneutics and Astronomy.

In early human societies, the phenomenon of unity observed in heaven and on earth was externalized and deified in the image of the Mother-Goddess. The Mother-Goddess, according to Baring and Cashford, represents an "image that inspires and focuses a perception of the universe as an organic, alive and sacred whole, in which humanity, the Earth and all life on Earth participate as 'her children'" (xi). In those early days, the esoteric-occult tradition complemented the exoteric religion; its rituals (Dromena or actions) had as their purpose to make the initiate feel the ineffable unity taught by the exoteric religion of the Mother-Goddess, that is, the divine circle of birth, death, and rebirth. However, in its early phase, the esoteric-occult tradition was not necessarily occult in a derogatory sense. As long as the exoteric religions adhered to the principle of unity personified by the Goddess, the esoteric tradition retained its esotericism only to complement the exoteric religion, without any conflict whatsoever. Tryphonopoulos asserts that "Orphism, Pythagoreanism, and the Mysteries persisted throughout the classical age. The Eleusinian mysteries even became part of the religious establishment of Athens" (The Celestial Tradition 31). However, with the rise of patriarchal religions, the fraction of the esoteric tradition which adhered to the cult of the Mother-Goddess became by necessity occult and acquired a subversive, conspiratorial character. Therefore, occultists' claim that the esoteric-occult tradition was and is hostile to Christian doctrine is accurate, since institutionalized Christianity is a patriarchal religion par-excellence.

In the pre-Christian age, when matriarchy belonged to the distant past, the Chthonic or Typhonian<sup>6</sup> tradition found shelter in the Egyptian mysteries of Isis and Osiris, in the Hellenic Eleusinian and Dionysian mysteries, and in the various sects of Gnosticism. Through the latter, the chthonic tradition made its appearance in the Christian world. In the twelfth century, the chthonic tradition coloured the

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<sup>6</sup>The term is used extensively by Gerald Massey and Kenneth Grant to indicate the primeval cult of the Mother-Goddess, who is "represented by the Seven Stars of Ursa Major" (Grant, Outer Gateways 242). For further information see Grant's Magical Revival, and Massey's Ancient Egypt.



philosophical and religious thought of the Cathars or Albigenses, and in the sixteenth century it reappeared in the guise of Rosicrucianism. In 1717, with the establishment of Freemasonry as the official representative of the solar esoteric tradition, the chthonic esoteric tradition, having infiltrated Freemasonry, initiated several chthonic fractions such as the Order of the Illuminati, the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross, and Ordo Templi Orientis in Germany, as well as the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, the Golden Dawn, and Crowley's Argenteum Astrum in England. At present, the best representative of the chthonic esoteric tradition is the English charter of the O.T.O., under the leadership of Crowley's student, Kenneth Grant.

In contrast, the solar-esoteric tradition of the pre-Christian period appears in various mystery schools, such as the Orphic and Cabiric mysteries in Greece, the mysteries of Mithras in Persia, and the sect of the Essenes in Judaea. There is ample evidence that Christianity emerged as the natural consequence of the solar mystery cults that preceded it. In the early Christian years, it seems that the Order of the Templars inherited the solar tradition, which later on found expression in Freemasonry, the main voice of the solar esoteric tradition.

### **The Mother Goddess and Humanity's Fall**

In Myth, Religion and Mother Right, Bachofen examines the universality of the sociological phenomenon of matriarchy and asserts that it "is not confined to any particular people but marks a cultural stage" (71) in human evolution. Bachofen's conjecture has been verified by more recent studies which acknowledge that present patriarchal sociological structures superseded matriarchal systems, and that the present dominant patriarchal religions superseded a religion that worshipped the feminine principle personified in the image of the Mother-Goddess. The Mother-Goddess, according to Massey, was the "earliest of all divinities in all lands being portrayed in the image of the reproducer that unites both Father and Mother in one person" ("Man in Search of His Soul" 5). Joseph Campbell, in his introduction to



Bachofen's Myth, Religion and Mother Right, states that "the analogy of begetting and birth to the sowing and harvest of the tilled fields gave rise to those great poetic mythologies of the earth goddess" (xxxii). Bachofen, commenting on the significance of the female in the shaping of early religious thought, asserts that the female

has exerted a great influence . . . on the education and culture of nations through her inclination toward the supernatural and divine, the irrational and miraculous . . . [that] woman was the repository of the first revelation, and woman played the most active part in the propagation of most religions. (Myth, Religion and Mother Right 85)

Robert Graves, in his introduction to The Greek Myths, declares that "Ancient Europe had no gods.<sup>7</sup> The Great Goddess<sup>8</sup> was regarded as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent; and the concept of fatherhood had not been introduced into religious thought" (13). Graves expresses the same idea in "The Bible in Europe", in which he claims that "the Supreme Being . . . had for thousands of years been regarded in Mediterranean countries as a goddess, not as a god" (47). Recent studies substantiate Graves's intuitive conjecture and reveal that the feminine principle reigned over a considerably long period in the history of human consciousness, and that patriarchal religions constitute a relatively recent phenomenon. Marija Gimbutas, in The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe and The Language of the Goddess, and Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, in The Myth of the Goddess, argue convincingly that, during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods up until the Iron Age (c. 1250 BC.), the cult of the Mother-Goddess reigned supreme. Moreover, as it was identified with the Earth, Moon, and Life, the cult of the Mother-Goddess came to represent unity itself. Baring and Cashford assert that "Moon, woman, earth and the cycle of gestation in all

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<sup>7</sup>According to Graves, "the word 'God' in all Indo-European languages is masculine, and God has always been credited with male thoughts and actions and served by male priests to whom women owe implicit obedience ("The Bible in Europe" 46).

<sup>8</sup>For further information concerning Graves's ideas on matriarchy, see The White Goddess, Mammon and the Black Goddess, King Jesus, and Difficult Questions, Easy Answers.



three can be seen to be governed by rhythm, order and an exact sequence of development" (49). Furthermore, Baring and Cashford maintain that despite the apparent observation of dualism in the phenomenal world, the Mother-Goddess succeeded in representing a holistic view of life that inspired a "perception of the universe as an organic, alive and sacred whole. . . . As the Great Mother, she presides over the whole of creation as goddess of life, death and regeneration, containing within herself the life of plants as well as the life of animals and human beings" (47-8).

During the early reign of the Mother-Goddess, traces of the esoteric tradition can be found in the mysterious personage of the shaman. Colin Wilson describes how the shaman "excites himself into a divine frenzy or ecstasy through drum beating and dancing, until he passes into a trance, when his spirit is supposed to have left his body" (The Occult 145). Moreover, Baring and Cashford affirm that the shamans "through their trance-flights visited a dimension inaccessible to ordinary tribal consciousness, and believed that the living visible world rests on the invisible world. Their task was to give an infinitely profounder meaning to the human cycle of growth, flowering and decay" (32).

We may presume, then, that the early esoteric tradition had a mystical bent; that is, the initiate or shaman was trying to experience the apparent exoteric unity of the phenomenal world, to become one with the Mother-Goddess, and finally to convey the experience to his/her fellow tribes people. Following this speculation, I hypothesize that the shaman, in order to initiate or communicate the ineffable feeling of unity that he experienced in his/her ecstatic journey, tried to transmit to aspirants the same stimuli that made him/her experience that particular feeling in the first place. Eventually, along with the development of the exoteric religions, which also had an administrative and political character, the esoteric tradition evolved in order to communicate the mystical feeling of unity or the feeling of elevation associated with the divine presence. Since this particular mystical experience is by definition

ineffable, the ceremony was acted or portrayed in various symbolical theatrical acts or Dromena.

The mystery schools of the pagan world probably emerged out of this human need to express the spiritual anguish that could not be communicated by human rational powers, and thus maintained the shamanistic mysticism of the early esoteric tradition. Cavendish asserts that "all mysteries are an overflow of the religious instinct. They promise a transcendent experience of the noumenous, the feeling of awe and reverence in the presence of the unknown" (An Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained 155). During the reign of the Great Mother, the Mysteries, that is, the esoteric tradition, interacted with the exoteric religious creeds without any apparent conflict. Edwin Hatch, in The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity, declares that in ancient Greece "side by side . . . with the religion which was openly professed and with the religious rites which were practised in the temples, not in antagonism to them, but intensifying their better elements and elaborating their rituals, were the splendid rites which were known as the Mysteries" (283).

The word "mystery" derives from the Hellenic word "mysterion", which means "the closing of the eyes" or dying, from the verb "myin", meaning to close the eyes (Skeat, Etymological Dictionary of the English Language 300), to die, or become initiated, that is, die and experience regeneration or, in other words, the essential unity of birth, death, and rebirth which the exoteric religion of the Great Goddess preached, and which was observable in the phases of the moon and in the four seasons on earth. Albert G. Mackey, in A Lexicon of Freemasonry (1858), asserts that in the mysteries of the pagan world (Hellas, Egypt, Persia), "we find a singular unity of design clearly indicating a common origin. . . . The ceremonies of initiation were all funereal in their character. They celebrated the death and the resurrection of some cherished being, either the object of esteem as a hero, or of devotion as a god" (313). Thus, the



mystery cults conveyed to the mystes or initiates the feeling invoked by the unity<sup>9</sup> observable in the macrocosm and microcosm and embodied by the image of the Mother-Goddess.

However, the unity represented by the Mother-Goddess was disrupted by the gradual appearance of patriarchal religions, which emerged as a natural consequence in the development of human consciousness. Campbell asserts that "with the dawn of the Iron Age (c. 1250 BC.) the old cosmologies and mythologies of the goddess mother were radically transformed, reinterpreted, and in a large measure even suppressed by those suddenly intrusive patriarchal warrior tribesmen" (Occidental Mythology 7). Baring and Cashford, commenting on this dramatic change in human history, state that, with the suppression of the Mother-Goddess, "the whole [was] violently fragmented and the parts set in opposition to each other, a situation of conflict that has endured to the present day" (156). Graves, in Mammon and the Black Goddess, expresses his conviction that the "political and social confusion of [the past] 3.000 years has been entirely due to man's revolt against woman as a priestess of natural magic and his defeat of her wisdom by the use of intellect" (47). And again in "Intimations of the Black Goddess", Graves insists that "the chaotic ethics of our epoch derive . . . from a revolution in early historical times that upset the balance between male and female principles: namely, the supersession of matriarchy by patriarchy" (145). This cosmohistoric change, which from a psychological perspective can be interpreted as a shift in consciousness from an alleged unity between the conscious and the unconscious to an overemphasis on the conscious element, is reflected in Plato's myth in the Symposium, where the primordial human being or "anthropos", a unified androgynous being, was divided by the gods<sup>10</sup> into two constituent parts with the advent of the patriarchal religions. Though divided, these

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<sup>9</sup>Mackey, citing the opinion of Warburton, states that the secret doctrine revealed in the Eleusinian mysteries "consisted in a declaration of the unity of God" (130).

<sup>10</sup>As in Genesis (3:22,3,4-6:6,7-11:6,7), Plato's gods conspire in order to suppress the inherent unity in human beings, which paradoxically threatens their existence.



two elements, male and female, never ceased yearning for their lost unity. Plato, using Aristophanes as his mouthpiece, declares that "their [male and female] ancient desire for one another is implanted in us, [and prompts us] to seek our original nature, make one of [the] two and [thus] heal the [fragmentary] state of human being [Translation mine]" (191).

Inevitably, along with the change of religious thought in the exoteric religions, the character of the esoteric tradition, channelled through the mystery cults, was affected. Some of the mystery cults, such as the Eleusinian and Dionysian in Greece, retained their distinct chthonic character and adhered to the cult of the Mother-Goddess from the Classical period to the end of the Hellenic civilisation, until the prevalence of patriarchal Christianity. Other mystery cults, such as the Orphic<sup>11</sup> and Cabiric<sup>12</sup> or Samothracian in Greece, as well as those of Mithras in Persia, adapted their rituals<sup>13</sup> to the new worship of the patriarchal deity (epitomized in the image of

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<sup>11</sup>The Orphic mysteries developed as a fraction of the Dionysian mysteries, and turned toward the masculine principle. Luther H. Martin states that "Dionysus embodied the elemental principle of nature, whereas Orpheus, who retained a closeness to his father Apollo, Dionysus's opposite brother, embodied civilization" (Hellenistic Religions 99). Furthermore, Mackey, commenting on the solar nature of the Orphic mysteries, asserts that "the initiated commemorated in their ceremonies . . . the murder of Bacchus by the Titans and his final restoration to the supreme government of the universe, under the name of Phanis [Sun]" (336).

<sup>12</sup>According to Mackey the mysteries of the Cabiri were "instituted in honour of Atys, the son of Cybele" (71). The chthonic origin of the myth is apparent. Cybele or Typhon is the Mother-Goddess or Goddess of the seven stars, and her son Atys is the son of the mother alone, that is, the manifestation of the Goddess, the Gnostic ogdoad, represented macrocosmically by the Sun behind the Sun, that is, the star system of Sirius. With the advent of the patriarchal religions, Atys ceased to be the child of the Mother alone and was identified with the Sun of the Solar system. Mackey, quoting Macrobius, affirms that "Atys was one of the names of the sun; in confirmation of this, we know that the mysteries were celebrated at the vernal equinox. They lasted three days, during which they represented in the person of Atys, the enigmatical death of the sun in winter and his regeneration in the spring" (71-2).

<sup>13</sup>However, we should bear in mind that the essence of the rituals remained the same, that is, the funereal character observed in the original chthonian mysteries did not change. The Sun of the solar system, though, replaced the Great Goddess of the seven stars as the ultimate begetter of life. For a further elaboration of this metathesis, see appendix on "Occult Hermeneutics and Astronomy".



the Sun), thus indicating a shift in human consciousness toward the rational analytical powers of the human brain.

Referring to the conflict between the chthonic and solar cults in Greece during the last stage of the Hellenic civilisation, Campbell and Hatch comment that the patriarchal forces did not succeed altogether in laying down the new patriarchal rules, and that finally it was the worship of the Mother that gained supremacy in Greece.<sup>14</sup> More specifically, Hatch, commenting on the character of the chthonic Hellenic mysteries asserts that "they were the worship not of the gods of the sky, Zeus, Apollo, and Athene, but of the gods<sup>15</sup> of the earth and the underworld, the gods of the productive forces of nature and of death" (284). Campbell adds that in spite of the advance of the "Apollonian . . . masculine spirituality . . . in the end it was Dionysus and his maenads who . . . gained the day in Greece. Only in Rome did an essential masculine spiritual order become effectively established and confirmed in the tenets and world legacy of Roman civil law" (qtd. in Bachofen Myth, Religion and Mother Right xlviii). Moreover, Graves asserts in "The Bible in Europe", that in Ancient Greece the official Olympian patriarchal religion did not succeed in eradicating all traces of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and that the Eleusinian mysteries retained their original chthonic character. In particular, Graves, echoing Pound's belief in a conspiracy of intelligence, considered Homer

a member of a secret mystery religion which had survived from matriarchal times, with seats at Eleusis . . . . Persephone, goddess of Life in Death, and Demeter goddess of the barley, assisted by Dionysus, who induced celestial visions, dispersed certain ancient principles of spiritual conduct, the observance of which would

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<sup>14</sup>Thus, Yeats's intuitive recognition of Greece's antithetical character (expressed in A Vision) is accurate.

<sup>15</sup>Hatch's statement should not be taken literally. The essence of the esoteric doctrine, as it was expressed in the chthonic mysteries, was purely of a monotheistic character. The Mother-Goddess symbolized the ultimate unity in the macrocosm and microcosm, and the aspirant's task was to feel that unity and become one with the divine.



guarantee a man's protection throughout his life on Demeter's Earth, and his eventual passport into Persephone's Paradise. (50)

Thus, I can assume that the esoteric tradition, as manifested in the chthonic Hellenic mysteries during the last stage of the Hellenic civilisation, had as its dual mission to accomplish what Yeats, Crowley and other occultists call the Great Work, that is, "the raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of Infinity" (Magick in Theory and Practice 4), and to overcome "hubris" and the Apollonian "Miden agan",<sup>16</sup> which reflects the Christian idea of humility and submission to God. Consequently, the esoteric tradition, at this particular stage in human history, becomes by necessity occult, since its doctrines oppose the creeds of the exoteric patriarchal religions. Furthermore, it assumes a conspiratorial character, since it desires--and in a way conspires--to re-establish the lost unity epitomized in the image of the Mother-Goddess, and to defend its esotericism from the antagonistic exoteric creed.

The history of the esoteric tradition, if interpreted in psychological and physiological terms, traces, in some way, the development of human consciousness itself. In the evolution of human consciousness, the Mother-Goddess, who formed the primordial divinity in early agricultural societies, represented, more or less, a balanced state of consciousness, a state of innocence, unity, femininity, bliss and, at the same time, ignorance of the functions of the phenomenal world. At the onset of the Iron Age and patriarchal religions, this archetypal unity, typified by the Goddess, vanished, causing a split<sup>17</sup> in the human consciousness that released the analytical or rational powers of the brain, resulting in duality. This differentiation in the human consciousness from a homogeneous or holistic state to a fragmentary one, constitutes, from a psychological point of view, humanity's fall, which was later misunderstood and mythologized in ensuing religions. The esoteric tradition, as it developed from

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<sup>16</sup>Miden Agan means "do not exceed yourself"; "be modest".

<sup>17</sup>The split came as a natural consequence in the evolution of human consciousness to enable human beings to cope with the complexities and hazards of the phenomenal world.



the shamanistic trance flights and the mystery schools of antiquity to the heretic thought of the Gnostics, Templars, and Cathars, is essentially feminine or chthonic in nature. Furthermore, the chthonic tradition reveals a recurrent pattern which, after the Fall, consists in the rediscovery of the divine essence or unity in the human soul, a process which could be precipitated in an initiatory way by the experience of the transcendental gnosis, that is, an ecstatic experience that could symbolically transmute or elevate the base qualities of the human psyche into a pure divine level. The culminating altered state of consciousness would result in palingenesis or the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, in the ritualistic death of the old personality and the emergence of a new self, conscious of its divine essence and free from the burden of duality.

### **Gnosticism and the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition**

By the end of the Hellenic civilisation and the commencement of the strict masculine order instituted by Rome and continued by Christianity, the conflict between the esoteric tradition and the patriarchal creeds reached a climax. With the triumph of historic Christianity, the esoteric chthonic tradition found Gnosticism as its main exponent. As we have already stated, Gnosticism is not a Christian heresy, but precedes Christianity and forms an amalgam of pagan thoughts which reflect the chthonic esoteric tradition. Cavendish, referring to the pagan character of the Gnostics, states that "in the early post-Christian period, the Gnostics took over the pagan tradition and created a prolific brood of minor mysteries which combined old pagan cults with Christianity" (155). Reitzenstein, commenting on Gnosticism's esoteric nature, asserts that "nothing is more thoroughly wrong than to consider Gnosticism as a first attempt at Christian philosophy or philosophy of religion" (387-88). In fact, Reitzenstein and Massey argue that Christianity itself is the natural development of the mystery cults of antiquity, as these cults manifest themselves in



Gnosticism.<sup>18</sup> According to Reitzenstein, "infant Christianity grew up between two thought-worlds which had begun to intermingle, the Greek and Oriental; it is obvious that both exerted an influence on it" (17). However, Reitzenstein does not draw the obvious distinction between the chthonic mystery cults and the solar ones; thus, Christianity becomes the natural development not of the chthonic mystery cults, but of the solar cults, particularly those of Mithras<sup>19</sup> in Persia and Rome, and of the Essenes<sup>20</sup> in Judaea. Furthermore, both Massey and Reitzenstein, as well as Baigent

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<sup>18</sup>It seems that Jung shared Reitzenstein and Massey's view. In Religious Ideas in Alchemy, Jung affirms that "the roots of Gnosticism do not lie in Christianity at all--it is far truer to say that Christianity was assimilated through Gnosticism" (138).

<sup>19</sup>For an exhaustive enquiry into the similarities between the mysteries of Mithras and Christianity, see Massey's works, particularly his lecture on "The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ". The masculine element in the Mithraic mysteries is well documented. Martin states that "Mithraism exhibited none of the chthonian character of the other Mysteries. It was a cult in honour of the Great God Mithras to which only males were admitted" (114). Mackey adds that "Mithras resided in the sun [of our solar system], and hence that luminary was worshipped as the abode of the God of Light" (304). Furthermore, Martin, commenting on the names of the seven Mithraic initiatory degrees, asserts that they all "have in common the systematic exclusion or suppression of the feminine" (118). Of course, the number seven (number of the Great Goddess of the seven stars, that is, the constellation of the Great Bear) indicates the primordial Chthonian or Typhonian descent of the Mysteries.

<sup>20</sup>The Hassidic group of the Essenes, a Jewish mystical sect, flourished at about 150 BC (Spence, An Encyclopaedia of Occultism) mainly in the area of the Dead Sea known as Qumran (Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran 37-8). The community of the Essenes at Qumran was destroyed by the Romans in 68 AD. Information about the Essenes, supplied by Josephus, Philo, Pliny the younger, as well as by the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in the area of Qumran between 1947 to 1952, reveal that the Essenes formed an apocalyptic or Messianic sect founded by the "Teacher of Righteousness" who was supposed to "inaugurate the new age" (Eliade, A History of Religious Ideas Vol. ii, 355). The solar character of the Essenes is evidenced by their use of the solar calendar; according to Baigent and Leigh, "The Qumran community used precisely . . . a solar calendar in contrast to the lunar calendar used by the priesthood of the Temple" (The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception 206). The relationship between the Essenes and the early Christians has long been a subject of debate among scholars. The plethora of information contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls established, however, the connection between Essenian and Christian thought. Professor Matthew Black of St. Andrews University, Scotland, declared that "it is from such an 'Essene-type' of Judaism that Christianity is descended" (The Scrolls and Christianity 92). Moreover, Eliade comments that "after the destruction of Qumran and the dispersal of the Essenes, some of those who escaped probably joined the Christian



and Leigh in The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception (1992), and Graves in "The Bible in Europe", argue that Paul was an initiate into the esoteric Gnostic tradition, and therefore was misunderstood and opposed by the exponents of historic Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Rietzenstein, in Hellenistic Mystery Religions (1911), proves that Paul was fully acquainted with the language and concepts of the mystery cults (79), and that he "owes to Hellenism the belief in his apostleship and his liberty" (89). Baigent and Leigh significantly connect Paul with the Essenes of Qumran: "Paul is particularly lavish in his use of Qumran terms and images. . . . It is clear that Paul is familiar with the metaphors, the figures of speech, the turns of phrase, the rhetoric used by the Qumran community in their interpretation of Old Testament texts" (The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception 204-5). In "The Bible in Europe", Graves notes that Paul disagreed with Christ's apostles James and Peter. Graves further recognises Paul as the founder of Christianity and asserts that "Paul's claim to have once risen to the third of seven Heavens (II. Corinthians XII, 1-4) shows that he was acquainted with the pre-

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communities of Palestine. In any case, the apocalyptic and esoteric tradition were maintained in the Christianity of the first two centuries, and they encouraged certain Gnostic tendencies" (356-7). In addition, Eliade asserts that the "analogies between the Essenian theological language and that of the Gospel of John are equally remarkable" (357). The belief that Jesus Christ was an initiate into Essenian thought has been maintained by many novelists, among them Renan in Life of Christ (1863), George Moore in Brook Kerith (1916), Edward Schure in Great Initiates (1889), Robert Graves in King Jesus (1946), and Nikos Kazantzakis in The Last Temptation of Christ (1954).

<sup>21</sup>The Church mythologists, according to this line of thinking, unaware of the secret doctrine, believed in the existence of a corporeal Christ or Messiah, the incarnation of God on earth, whose mission was to redeem humanity from sin. Massey comments that "the Christ proclaimed by Peter and James was the Mythical Messiah of the Times-cycles, the evercoming one, converted into a historical character" (Paul, the Gnostic Opponent of Peter 19). Paul, as an initiate to the esoteric tradition, believed in Christ as a symbol of the immortal principle in human beings. More than likely an initiate to the solar mystery cult of the Essenes, Paul propagated the solar part of the esoteric tradition and renounced the feminine principle. According to Massey, "Paul was opposed to those Gnostics who exalted the feminine type of the soul--repudiated it and proclaimed his Christ. His Word, Logos or Messiah, is strictly masculine" (15).



Christian Alexandrian Gnostics who invented this concept and whose influence on the 'Gospel according to St. John' is well known" (44).

True to the esoteric tradition, the Gnostic sects exalted the feminine principle, retained their esoteric mysticism, and maintained the esoteric conviction that human beings could unite with the divine that exists in the soul only through initiatory revelation. Gnosticism's affinity with the chthonic esoteric tradition can be discerned in the various extant Gnostic myths, which also reflect and, in a way, lament the shift in consciousness from the feminine to the masculine principle. Sofia, or Wisdom, the feminine principle, was the first emanation of the unknown, ineffable, and alien god. In "The Apocalypse of Adam", one of the Nag Hammadi<sup>22</sup> tractates, Adam describes to his son Seth the original unity that was disrupted by the appearance of the Demiurgos (Creator) or Ialdabaoth, the ruler, patriarchal archon, or jealous god of the Old Testament:

When god had created me out of the earth along with Eve your mother, I went about with her in a glory which she had seen in the aeon from which we had come forth. She taught me a word of knowledge of the eternal god. And we resembled the great eternal angels, for we were higher than the god who had created us and the powers with him whom we did not know. Then god, the ruler of the aeons and the powers, divided us in wrath. Then we became two aeons. (279)

This schism in the human consciousness between the feminine and masculine principle, or disruption of unity by the interference of Ialdabaoth, is a predominant theme in the tractates of the Nag Hammadi Library. In the "Gospel of Philip", the Gnostic Christ reveals to his disciples that "when Eve was still in Adam death did not exist. When she was separated from him death came into being" (150); and again, "if

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<sup>22</sup>The Nag Hammadi Library consists of fourth century papyrus manuscripts of Gnostic origin discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945. The ideas expressed in the Nag Hammadi Library are important because they reflect the teachings of the Golden Dawn, where, for instance, the Fall of Man was a metaphor for the imbalance of forces.



the woman had not separated from the man, she should not die with the man. His separation became the beginning of death. Because of this Christ came to repair . . . and again unite the two" (151).

Thus, Gnosticism conforms to the chthonic esoteric tradition and desires to bring back the unity or state of being disrupted by the powerful emergence of the masculine principle. The Gnostic Demiurgos thus becomes humanity's arch-enemy, since it is He who created the material, phenomenal world which has entrapped the spiritual, feminine aspect of humanity. Graves, true to the chthonic, Gnostic spirit asserts that "the true fiend rules in God's name" (qtd. in Seymour-Smith, Robert Graves 115). According to Massey, the Gnostic Christ, who came to "unite the two", did not exist as a historical figure, but only as a symbol of the divine principle which abides in the human psyche and which corresponds to the Gnostic concept of the thios anthropos or divine human being, "a being of both sexes, as was the Egyptian Horus . . . the spirit or soul which belongs to the female as to the male and represents that which could only be a human reality in the spiritual domain or the Pleroma of the Gnostics" (The Logia of the Lord 2).

The doctrine of the divine human being is prevalent in Gnosticism. In the Nag Hammadi tractates "On the Origin of the World", "The Hypostasis of the Archons", and "Asklepius", the creator of the material universe, Ialdabaoth, the patriarchal principle, boasts of his supremacy and omnipotence. Sofia, the feminine principle, responds to the boastful god that he is "mistaken . . . [that] there is an immortal man [anthropos] of light who has been in existence before you and who will appear among your modelled forms; he will trample you to scorn" ("On the Origin of the World" 175). Irenaeus, the Gnostics' arch-enemy and exponent of historic Christianity, confesses in his Contra Haereses that

they [Gnostics] taught that Ialdabaoth, the chief of the first hebdomad, who held his mother in contempt, became puffed up and boasted "I am father and God and there is no one above me". His mother hearing him

speaking thus cried out to him "Do not lie, Ialdabaoth, for the Father of all, the first Anthropos is above thee, and so is anthropos the Son of Anthropos" (qtd. in Massey, Natural Genesis 86).

Irenaeus comments further that, according to the Gnostics, the doctrine of the divine anthropos is "the great and abstruse mystery, namely that the power which is above all others, and contains them all in his embrace is termed 'Anthropos'; hence does the saviour style himself the 'Son of Man' [Anthropos]" (Liber I. ch.xii. 4). According to the Gnostic Naassene Document (c. 100 AD.), examined in Reitzenstein's Hellenistic Mystery Religions, Mead's Thrice-Greatest Hermes, and Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual To Romance, the divine anthropos is of a dual nature and resides in the human soul or unconscious; it is called "the son of god, the Logos, the 'one' man [anthropos](or primal man [anthropos]) and the All in All" (qtd. in Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery Religions 52). Reitzenstein and Weston prove that the Gnostic Naassene Document is an amalgam of pagan teachings derived from the mystery cults of antiquity. The chthonic character of this document is revealed by Hippolytus,<sup>23</sup> who regarded the Naassenes<sup>24</sup> "as the most ancient form of Christian heresy" (qtd. in Mead, Thrice-Greatest Hermes 142) and as the "sectaries of the Mysteries of the Mother of the Gods" (143). Furthermore, according to Hippolytus, "Aphrodite [Astarte, Great Goddess of the Seven Stars, or Goddess 15] is Genesis according to them [Naassenes]" (Liber V. æ).

The Hermetic Writings of the Thrice-Greatest Hermes (c. 200 AD.) also emphasize the doctrine of the divine anthropos. The first tractate, Poemandres, or Corpus Hermeticum, stresses that anthropos was created strictly in the image of the "Nous-Theos" or "Pater apanton" [Mind-God or Father of All], who is Life and Light,

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<sup>23</sup>Hippolytus (182-251), best known for Philosophoumena or Refutation of All Heresies, which constitutes the prima materia on information about the Naassenes and the concept of the divine anthropos.

<sup>24</sup>Hippolytus, in the first book of Philosophoumena, states that the name Naassenes derives from the word "naas" which means serpent. The serpent is an ancient and well known symbol of the Mother-Goddess.



Male and Female," and who engendered anthropon "equal to itself, and loved as its own creation [translation mine]" (vol.,I Speech A:xi-xii, p. 23). Thus, as stated in Poemandres, anthropos was not created by Ialdabaoth, since the latter was created by the supreme Mind-God to be "the chief Formative Power of the seven Demiurgic Potencies of the sensible cosmos [Mead's translation]" (A:xi).

The doctrine of the divine human spirit or anthropos, as it is reflected in the chthonic esoteric tradition, is important to our study since it mirrors Yeats's new divinity and Crowley's Crowned and Conquering Child. That Yeats and Crowley were acquainted with the esoteric chthonic tradition is certainly clear; and, as the studies of Surette and Tryphonopoulos reveal, Pound was also an initiate to the underground current. Graves's ideas, as expressed mainly in the White Goddess, are also steeped in the esoteric tradition.

The gnostic doctrine of the divine anthropos was not destined to prevail. The two church councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, 325 and 451 AD. respectively, were decisive in establishing patriarchal Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, because of two edicts issued by the Roman emperor Constantine in 326 and 333 AD., the Gnostic sects were characterized as Christian heresies and persecuted as such. Finally, in 396 AD., Alaric, the king of the Goths, under the auspices of the Church, invaded Greece and allegedly killed the last hierophant of the Sanctuary of the Goddess in Eleusis. Thus, we can presume that along with the

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<sup>25</sup>It is significant to note that the Roman empire at that time was a haven for solar cults which shared many elements with Christianity, proving that Christianity was the natural development or climax of the solar tradition, that it had pagan solar ancestry, and that it was not a unique phenomenon of divinely inspired religious thought. The two predominant solar cults of the empire at that time were "the Invincible Sun" (Sol Invictus) and Mithras. Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln comment that "under the auspices of the Sol Invictus cult . . . Christianity consolidated its position. . . . The cult of Sol Invictus . . . paved the way for the monotheism of Christianity" (Holy Blood, Holy Grail 367). Furthermore, as Baigent et al. indicate, the cult of the Invincible Sun "harmonized with the cult of Mithras, which was also prevalent in Rome and the empire at that time and which also involved solar worship" (367).



destruction of the Eleusinian temple, the chthonic esoteric tradition vanished as well from the politico-religious scene,<sup>26</sup> at least in the Western world.

### **The Templar's Chthonic Enigma**

However, after an absence of almost seven centuries, it seems that the suppressed chthonic gnostic tradition reappeared in the notorious Order of the Knights Templar, the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit or Albigenses, Jewish Cabbalism, and alchemy. Baring and Cashford, in their erudite enquiry into the feminine principle through the centuries, The Myth of the Goddess, testify that in the twelfth century, the Gnostic tradition, "which [was] forced underground in the early centuries of Christianity" (637), reappeared in the movements mentioned above. They also argue that the troubadours were a means of spreading the esoteric gnostic message. According to Baring and Cashford, "it is in these diverse movements [Knights Templar, Catharism, Jewish Cabbalism, and alchemy], so strangely allied with each other and with the great popular movement of devotion to the Black Virgin, that the feminine principle once again became the focus of consciousness" (636).

The violent suppression of the Templars and Albigenses, which in the case of the latter took the form of a crusade, reveals the magnitude of the antagonism between the esoteric chthonic tradition and the Christian Church. By going back to the Middle

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<sup>26</sup>In the philosophical scene, however, it seems that the philosophico-religious school of Neoplatonism played the role of opposition to the Church party, and carried on some of its Gnostic inheritance. Hatch considers Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, as "the true Gnostic, though he [Plotinus] repudiates the name. . . . The logical development of the thoughts of Basilides and Justin, of Valentinus and the Naassenes, is to be found in Neo-Platonism, that splendid vision of incomparable and irrevocable cloudland in which the sun of Greek philosophy set" (133). There is no serious evidence, however, to make us consider Neoplatonism as a conspiratorial occult society, in spite of its meddling with the occult in its later phase. Of course, its influence on the Romantics has been discussed by many scholars; for its influence on Yeats, see Wilson, Raine and Harper. Surette and Tryphonopoulos also comment on Neoplatonism in relation to Pound in A Light of Eleusis, and The Birth of Modernism, and The Celestial Tradition, respectively.



Ages and by adopting a gnostic mode of thinking to better understand the hysteria over the secret societies and sinister conspiracies, we can deduce that the belief that was impressed in the minds of those who remained faithful to the cult of the Mother-Goddess was that of a sacred struggle against an evil maker (demiurgos) who had enslaved the human spirit in the prison of materialism, and who had as an accomplice the Church that represented him on earth. However, an analogous argument was used by the adherents of the dominant patriarchal religion, who considered "heretics" instruments of evil powers that wanted dominion over the earth. Inevitably, each party accused the other of devil worshipping. Crowley wittily states in Magick in Theory and Practice that "the Devil is, historically, the God of any people that one personally dislikes" (193). Bearing Crowley's statement in mind, we can better comprehend the enigma of the Templars and Albigenses, the successors of the esoteric tradition in the twelfth century.

The story of the Knights Templar and that of the Albigenses is indeed fascinating and valuable for it provides the earliest bit of information about the Christian phase of the conflict between the chthonic esoteric tradition and the Church. Guillaume or William de Tyre<sup>27</sup> is the earliest historian to provide information about the Knights Templar or, as they were officially called, the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon. According to William of Tyre, Hugues de Payen, a noble knight from Champagne, along with eight comrades, founded the Order in 1118. Their *raison d'etre* was simply to "keep the roads and highways safe . . . for the protection of pilgrims [in Jerusalem]" (Vol. I, 525). For nine years, the nine knights protected the pilgrims in the holy land, miraculously with no reported casualties; at the end of their nine-year gestation, they returned to France in 1127

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<sup>27</sup>William of Tyre, born in Christian Syria, became the Archbishop of Tyre and the Chancellor of the kingdom in Jerusalem. Between 1175 and 1185 he wrote A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, in which he presents a rather biased picture of the Knights Templar.



where they were recognized by the Church<sup>28</sup> as an official religious-military order, with Hugues de Payen as the first Grand Master. In the ensuing years, the power and wealth of the Order increased at an astonishing rate. In 1139, Pope Innocent II issued a bull which actually enabled the Poor Knights of Christ to create a state-within-a-state, since they were required by the papal bull to owe allegiance to no one but the Pope himself. As for wealth, the Templars are recognized today as the first to institute a system of modern banking and checking (Baigent et al., Holy Blood, Holy Grail 71). However, the power and the glory did not last for long. On Friday, October 13, 1307, Philip the Fair, with the co-operation of Pope Clement V, ordered the arrest of the Templars in France and the confiscation of their properties on charges<sup>29</sup> of blasphemy, heresy, and sexual promiscuity or unnatural vice. In 1314 the last act of the drama was enacted<sup>30</sup> when the last Grand Master of the Order, Jacques de Molay, together with the preceptor of Normandy, Geoffroi de Charnay, were burned at the stake.

The story of the Knights Templar, as presented by William of Tyre, sounds like a legendary tale, or at least the surface of a more complicated and multi-layered narrative. The fact that the Order was under the absolute protection of the Church reveals that it, in the beginning at least, formed part of the esoteric solar tradition, and

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<sup>28</sup>In January 1128 by a Church council at Troyes.

<sup>29</sup>According to Nesta Webster, "the ceremony of initiation into their Order was accompanied by insults to the Cross, the denial of Christ, and gross obscenities . . . by the authorization of unnatural vice" as well as by the "adoration of an idol which was said to be the image of the true God" (52). Baigent et al., in Holy Blood Holy Grail, cite the testimonies of some of the knights who were arrested and allegedly testified against the orthodoxy of the Order. According to these testimonies, the Templars believed that Christ was a "false prophet" and certainly not a God to be worshipped; regarding the Cross, the neophyte knights were told not to "set much faith [in it], for it is too young" (85).

<sup>30</sup>Perhaps the last act was enacted when, during the French revolution in 1789, a man allegedly smeared his hands with the blood of the decapitated Louis XVI, and cried to the crowd "Jacques de Molay, thou art avenged", an incident that has been commemorated by Yeats's famous line "vengeance for Jacques Molay" in "In Time of Civil War" (1923).



therefore had at its disposal the facts about the origin of Christianity. Peter Partner, in The Knights Templar and Their Myth (1981), citing the opinion of the Catalan Knight, Ramon Lull, claims that the Templars were guilty of revealing "horrid . . . secrets" that could endanger "St. Peter's bark" (65), that is, endanger the foundation of the Christian Church as represented by Peter. Echoing Lull, Eliphas Levi, in History of Magic, recognises the connection between the Templars, whom he considers horrible conspirators, and the esoteric tradition, as the latter evolved in Egypt, that is, the chthonic or Typhonian tradition. Levi assumes that the Templars were rightly persecuted for they revealed esoteric knowledge to the profane by instituting four Free-Masonic Metropolitan Lodges in Naples (for the East), Edinburgh (for the West), Stockholm (for the North), and Paris (for the South) (212).

The foundation<sup>31</sup> of the Order itself reveals its esoteric font. As we have already indicated, the number nine played a very significant role in the formation of

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<sup>31</sup>Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, in Holy Blood, Holy Grail (1982), and in the subsequent The Messianic Legacy (1986), provide conclusive evidence about the existence of a secret society named Priore de Sion, which had created the Order of the Knights Templar "as its military and administrative arm" (Holy Blood Holy Grail 106). According to these theorists, the declared objective of the Order of the Priory of Sion was the "restoration of the Merovingian dynasty and bloodline, not only to the throne of France, but to the thrones of other European nations as well" (107). The society, still in operation today, acts "behind the scenes" and has "orchestrated certain of the critical events in Western history" (107). The writers became aware of the existence of the Order during their investigation into the Rennes-le-Chateau mystery, and mainly through some privately printed works that appeared mysteriously in the Bibliotheque Nationale since 1956, which were related to the subject that they were investigating. What is important to this present study is that these works establish the chthonic esoteric character of the Order of the Priory of Sion. In The Red Serpent, cited in Holy Blood, Holy Grail, the author(s) claim: "From she whom I desire to liberate, there wafts towards me the fragrance of the perfume which impregnates the Sepulchre. Formerly, some named her: ISIS, queen of all sources benevolent. . . . To others, she is MAGDALENE, of the celebrated vase filled with healing balm. The initiated know her true name: NOTRE DAME DES CROSS" (102). Isis, of course, is one of the many names of the Mother Goddess and, as Ean Begg claims in The Cult of the Black Virgin (1985), is "the true goddess of France, now known as Our Lady of Light" (61). Furthermore, the church at Rennes-le-Chateau is dedicated to Mary the Magdalene, thus revealing the powerful influence that the cult of the Mother Goddess exerted on that place, which was directly related to the Albigenses. As for the Priory



the Order. Not surprisingly, the number nine in the Jewish Cabbala corresponds to the "Sephira Yesod, [which is] the foundation [of the Tree of Life]" (Regardie, The Tree of Life 52). Furthermore, the number nine reveals the inner chthonic character of the Order, since "Yesod is lunar in nature, the Moon being [its] luminary [attribute]" (52). Moreover, Grant, commenting on the ninth sephira, states that "it is the sephira of the lunar magick [sic] of Aub, or Ob, the serpent. . . . Yezod or Yesod . . . is an apt description of the Sephira which corresponds to the sexual centre in the human body" (Magical Revival 60). Grant's remark enables us to comprehend and confirm the Tantric influence on the Order of the Knights Templar, as well as the Order's connection to the Albigensian heresy. The lunar character of the Order is also suggested by the seal,<sup>32</sup> dated 1303 AD., of its English branch. At the top of the seal is the crescent moon, symbol of the Mother Goddess, while underneath is the lion<sup>33</sup> of England with two stars on each side that noetically form a triangle with the third star at the middle top of the crescent moon. Thus, along with the number nine, the number three also dominates the myth of the Templars and reveals its chthonic nature.

Mackey, in A Lexicon of Freemasonry, asserts that "in Freemasonry, 9 derives its value from its being the product of 3 multiplied into itself" (325). Therefore, the number three, according to Mackey, is the "most important and universal in its

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of Sion's desire to restore the Merovingian dynasty, Grant provides an obvious hint, commenting that "the monarch who initiated the Merovingian bloodline was said to have been sired by a creature of the deep" (Outer Gateways 86).

<sup>32</sup>Illustrated in Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln Holy Blood, Holy Grail.

<sup>33</sup>The lion is usually associated with the sun. However, in the chthonic tradition, and in the Templars' case, the sun is the projection of the Great Goddess, or Goddess of the seven stars. In the seal of the Templars, this is amply demonstrated. The lion becomes the manifestation of the Goddess or Argo, the child of the Mother alone, astronomically projected in the star system of Sirius, and not in the sun of the solar system. Grant points out in Magical Revival, that "Sirius [is the star that] manifested [her] light [of the Great Goddess] and opened the year by announcing the inundation of the Nile which occurred at the summer solstice, when the sun entered the sign of the Lion" (64). In the seal of the Templars, the tail of the lion clearly forms an 'S' shape! This is probably another clue which reveals the Templars's adherence to the chthonic esoteric tradition.



application of all the mystic numbers" (487). In addition to the three stars in the seal of the Order, the family shield of the founder of the Order, Hugues de Payen, included three black<sup>34</sup> heads. In order to reveal the important connection of the number three to the Order of the Knights Templar, we should note that the alleged idol worshipped by the Templars is associated, in the Jewish Caballa, with the third sephira, which in its turn represents Binah (the source of understanding) or the Mother-Goddess. If we take into consideration the charges levelled against the Templars, we may assume that since Christ for them was not a God to be worshipped, then the divinity worshipped by the Templars was perhaps the Great Mother-Goddess, and that the idol or Baphomet, which was a token of adoration for them, symbolized the Great Goddess. Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln assert that the name Baphomet "might have been a corruption of the Arabic 'abufihamet'. . . . This means 'Father<sup>35</sup> of Understanding' . . . and 'Father' in Arabic is also taken to imply 'source'. If this is indeed the origin of Baphomet, it would therefore refer presumably to some supernatural or divine principle" (32). This divine principle is the Mother-Goddess, who is associated in the Jewish Cabala with the third sephira or Binah, the "source of understanding", and is identified with

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<sup>34</sup>The significance of the colour black in the shield of Hugues de Payen is closely associated, as we demonstrate, with the third sephira or Binah. According to Regardie the "colour of Binah is said to be black, since black absorbs all other colours just as all material forms after numberless transformations and mutations return to and are absorbed back into the raw substance" (The Tree of Life 49).

<sup>35</sup>The title "Father" should not be confused with the male gender. We remind the reader that the gnostic divine alien source was named "Pater" (Father) and that it was considered to be an androgynous being. However, the gnostic Father corresponds, as Irinaeus asserts, to the Mother-Goddess who symbolizes eternal unity and the assimilation of opposites. The goddess encompasses the male principle and, as it is stated in Crowley's The Book of the Law, "yet she [Nuit, feminine principle] shall be known and I [Hadit, male principle] never" (II:4-29). According to Grant, Baphomet is "androgynous who is the hieroglyph of arcane perfection. The number of his Atu (key) is XV, which is Yod He (the first two letters of the Divine name IHVH (Jehovah); they represent Father and Mother) the Monogram of the Eternal, the Father one which the Mother, the Virgin seed one with all-containing Space. He is therefore Life, and Love" (Magical Revival 52).



Isis . . . [who] was regarded as the parent of the universe, the first offspring of the ages, ruler of the sky, the sea, and all things on earth . . . the Supernal Mother whom the whole of the ancient world worshipped under many names. . . . The personification of the great passive reproductive power which conceived miraculously and brought forth every living creature and thing. (Regardie, The Tree of Life 91-2)

In addition, there is another clue which substantiates my hypothesis that the Mother-Goddess is the hidden factor in the riddle of the Templars. On consulting the official records of the Inquisition, Baigent et al. discovered that "Among the goods of the Temple [Guillaume Pidoye, Guillaume de Gisors, and Raynier Bourdon] had found a large head of silver gilt . . . the image of a woman, which Guillaume, on 11 May, presented before the Inquisition. The head carried a label CAPUT LVIII<sup>36</sup> mm" (126). The female idol that the Templars worshipped is associated with the Mother-Goddess; moreover, the sign of Virgo<sup>37</sup> indicates the role that Tantraism played in the Order of the Knights Templar and also indicates the Order's esoteric affiliations with the mystery cults of antiquity.

Hugh Schonfield, in an appendix to The Essene Odyssey (1984), refers briefly to the idol of the Templars. After calculating the numerical value of the word Baphomet in Hebrew, Schonfield discovered that the name corresponded to the Hellenic word Sofia.<sup>38</sup> He then rightfully assumed that the Templars, "whether

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<sup>36</sup>The number fifty-eight corresponds to the esoteric chthonic tradition in the following way: five is the female number par excellence, while eight is the "height" or manifestation of the Goddess of the seven stars, that is, the child of the Mother alone. The addition of these two numbers gives the number thirteen, well known for its lunar affiliations. Additionally, the reverse of thirteen, that is thirty-one, is perhaps indicative of the form that the Tantric current followed in the rituals of the Templars. Grant comments that "31 . . . indicates that the key to the formula of Magick especially characteristic of the Beast and the Woman is to be sought in the XI O.T.O." (Magical Revival 44).

<sup>37</sup>The sign of Virgo is related to Venus, the goddess of love. According to Grant, Venus is "the instrument, in the sexual sense, of ultimate transcendence of individual consciousness" (Magical Revival 38).

<sup>38</sup>The Gnostic name of the Mother Goddess.



through the Cathars or independently, had access to Gnostic mythology which in turn had derived from extremely ancient cosmological interpretations" (164). Schonfield's revealing statement proves our position about the chthonic esoteric character of the Knights Templar, and also reminds us of the lineage of Gnosticism, which derives from the esoteric chthonic mystery cults of antiquity, mysteries that were consecrated to the Mother-Goddess. That the Templars were affiliated with Gnosticism has also been asserted by Jessie L. Weston in From Ritual to Romance (1919). Weston assumes that the Templars had come in contact with survivors of the Naassene Gnostics. Weston hints at the chthonic esoteric knowledge the Naassenes possessed and disseminated to the Templars:

That [the Templars] were held to be Heretics is very generally admitted, but in what their Heresy consisted no one really knows, little credence can be attached to the stories of idol worship often repeated. If their Heresy, however, were such as indicated above [connection with Gnosticism through the Naassenes], a Creed which struck at the very root and vitals of Christianity, we can understand at once the reason for punishment, and the necessity for secrecy. (187)

### **Cathars, Troubadours, Free-Love, and the Church**

It is well documented that the Knights Templar had, indeed, affiliations with the Cathars or Albigenses. In fact, as Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln indicate in Holy Blood, Holy Grail, Bertrand de Blanchefort, the fourth grand master of the Order (1153-1170), a "nobleman with Cathar sympathies . . . was probably the most significant of all Templar grand masters. . . . It was Bertrand who transformed the Knights Templar into the superbly efficient, well-organized, and magnificently disciplined hierarchical institution they then became" (93).

Weston's remark about the dangerous creed<sup>39</sup> propagated by Gnosticism that would "[strike] at the very root and vitals of Christianity", might explain the blind

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<sup>39</sup>The dangerous creed refers to the pagan, esoteric, chthonic roots of Gnosticism, which, therefore, had access to the true facts about the origin of Christianity.



fury of the Church and its move to exterminate the Cathars and destroy Lanquedoc, that superb cultural centre where Catharism flourished in twelfth century southern France.

Lanquadoc was a fertile place for the growth of heretical thought. It was an intellectual centre where philosophy, the arts, and learning in general were greatly encouraged; and, as Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln point out, "it was the most advanced and sophisticated centre in Christendom, with the possible exception of Byzantium"<sup>40</sup> (51). Furthermore, because of its religious tolerance, it was an ideal place for the unfolding of the esoteric chthonic tradition. Zbigniew Herbert, quoted in Berman's Coming to Our Senses, states that

the south [Lanquadoc] was culturally syncretic, a potpourri of Moorish poetry and medicine, Jewish number mysticism (the Cabalistic revival), troubadours and travelling minstrels whose lyrical ballads spoke of love and satire. Schools of medicine, philosophy and astronomy were active in cities such as Narbonne, Avignon, Montpellier, and Berziers long before the foundation of universities, and Aristotle was first taught in the West, via Arabic translation, in Toulouse. (189-90)

Moreover, there is evidence presented by Ladurie, in Montaillou, that in the area of southern France, specifically in the locality of Montaillou, there was a continuation of

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<sup>40</sup>In fact, according to Runciman, Byzantium was responsible for the spreading of the heretic Gnostic doctrine in the region of southern France. In Runciman's view, the Cathars received their heretic ideas from the Bogomils of Bulgaria, who at the end of the eleventh century had infiltrated even the capital of Byzantium, Constantinople. Runciman points out that "the close connection between the Cathars of France and Italy and the Bogomils of the Balkan peninsula is a fact that no one need doubt" (The Medieval Manichee 163); Runciman adds that "the initiation ceremonies of the Bogomils of Constantinople and the Cathars of Lanquadoc were basically the same" (165). Moreover, the president of the first heretical council, held at Saint-Felix-de-Caraman (near Toulouse) in 1167, was a Greek from Constantinople named Nicetas, who claimed that he was the bishop of the heretical Gnostic church of Constantinople. Even though Nicetas's claim cannot be substantiated, the fact that he was a dualist heretic, and his unchallenged presidency in the council, cause Runciman to conclude that "the Albigensian Church . . . was . . . the direct child of Nicetas and his council, it [the Albigensian Church] always retained his doctrines" (124).



the cult of the Mother-Goddess, and that the ancient fertility rites related to the worship of the Goddess were incorporated into the worship of the Virgin Mary or Notre Dame (310).

Catharism<sup>41</sup> appeared in the region of Lanquadoc at about 1100 AD., and by 1200 the whole area of southern France had converted to heretic Gnosticism. Catharism, as the name implies, was purely of an ascetic nature; its adherents were strict vegetarians and pacifists, and were categorized as "parfaits" (perfects) or "croyantes" (mere believers). The parfaits formed the elite, living exemplary saintly lives of chastity and asceticism.

The feminine nature of Catharism is well recognized and established by historians. Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, in Holy Blood, Holy Grail, assert that the Cathars "subscribed . . . to a recognition of the feminine principle in religion . . . [their] preachers and teachers . . . were of both sexes" (52). Ean Begg, in The Cult of the Black Virgin, points out that

one of the most remarkable and distinctive features of Catharism, which it shared with some early Gnostic groups, was that women were admitted to their priesthood of parfaits and parfaites. A celebrated example is afforded by Esclarmonde of Foix, the owner of Montsegur and inspirer of its resistance, who bore eight children before, with her husband's agreement, she became a parfaite. (136)

It was, perhaps, the feminine nature of Catharism that triggered the patriarchal wrath of institutionalized Christianity and caused its ultimate destruction. In 1209, Pope Innocent III declared the Albigensian crusade, motivated by the murder of Pierre de Castelnou, a legate sent to the region of southern France in 1208. The crusade, led

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<sup>41</sup>Ekbert of Schonau, archbishop of Cologne (1159-1167), coined the term Cathar from the Greek word "Katharos", meaning pure or clean. Ekbert believed that the Cathars were adherents to Manichean Gnosticism and castigated them in his Thirteen Sermons Against the Cathars (1163).

by Simon de Montfort and allied with Dominic Guzman,<sup>42</sup> lasted for about forty years, until 1244, when Montsegur, the last fortress of the Albigenses, surrendered to the soldiers of the Cross. The Albigensian crusade, "one of the darkest periods of European history and a blot upon the history of the Church" (Baigent, Leigh, Lincoln, Holy Blood, Holy Grail 191), is remembered today as the first case of genocide<sup>43</sup> in the history of Western civilisation.

In order to comprehend the hidden motives that prompted the Church to exterminate Catharism (including, of course, the political and economic conflicts and expediencies between southern and northern France), we should examine more closely the metaphysical Gnostic beliefs of the Cathars, and consider how these beliefs could have possibly influenced the religious sentiment of the people.

We have already outlined the hypothesis of the Gnostic dualistic conception of the universe. The kernel of this hypothesis is that the material world constitutes the personification of the evil principle or Rex Mundi, that is, the Archon or King of the world, while the ultimate divinity or Mind God is an alien, neutral or male/female entity outside the sphere of the natural world. Cavendish states that the Cathars believed that "there was a series of Aeons between God and the natural world. The latter was the creation of Jehovah [Ialdabaoth] the God of the Old Testament, who was equated with Satan" (An Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained 96). Thus, the Orthodox Catholic Church, the representative of the usurper god Ialdabaoth, became for the Gnostic Cathars the representative of evil on earth. Consequently, the main metaphysical concern of the Cathars was to transcend the evil material world and embrace the noumenal world of ultimate divinity. This transcendence could be

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<sup>42</sup>Founder of the monastic order of the Dominicans (1206), and instigator of the Holy Inquisition (1233).

<sup>43</sup>The documented atrocities are notorious. Well known is the case of Bergiers where, literally, all of its citizens were massacred, and that of Montsegur where two-hundred parfaits were burned alive. During the first fifteen years of hostilities, estimated Cathar casualties amounted to one million.



achieved, as the Gnostic Nag-Hammadi<sup>44</sup> tractates and Hermetic Writings indicate, only by an individual<sup>45</sup> process that would bring about self knowledge and, finally, "palingenesis" or rebirth. Furthermore, according to Gnostic doctrine, the ultimate alien divinity is reflected in Christ, who forms the immortal principle in human beings or the Son of Anthropos. According to Baring and Cashford, "the Cathars taught that Christ was the image of the in-dwelling divine spirit in the human soul, and that human beings could awake from their sleep of ignorance to awareness of this spirit" (638). Thus, the initiation or stimulation of this divine spirit or Son of Divine Anthropos, through a mystical shamanistic experience, would result in individuals transcending their ordinary state of being and engendering a new state of consciousness that would permit them to experience and become one with the divine presence or Anthropos. This idea is at one with Yeats's new divinity, the birth of the turbulent child of the altar, the product of Unity of Being, that is, the assimilation of opposites<sup>46</sup> and transcendence of the material world or Great Wheel, Crowley's accomplishment of the Great Work and emergence of Horus, the crowned and conquering child, Pound's new state represented by the birth of Brimos, the child of Goddess Aphrodite, born at the last stage of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Graves's new state of consciousness represented by the Black Goddess.

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<sup>44</sup>See especially The Gospel of Thomas and The Gospel of Philip. For example, in The Gospel of Thomas, Jesus explicitly says to his disciples, "The kingdom is inside of you. . . . When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty" (126).

<sup>45</sup>Therefore, the priests of the Catholic Orthodox Church became superfluous.

<sup>46</sup>In the Nag Hammadi tractate "The Gospel of Thomas", Jesus exclaims, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside . . . and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female . . . then you will enter the Kingdom" (129). And again, "When you make the two one, you will become the sons of man [Anthropos]" (137), that is, recognize the divine origin or descent and become one with the Creator.

This transcendental or mystical experience, which could expand human consciousness, could be achieved by many spiritual exercises, such as meditation, fasting, and yoga, techniques that the Cathars were well aware of. Furthermore, the Cathars had in their possession another secret that was intimately related to their need to experience, in an altered state of consciousness, the ineffable divine unity, and that was sex. Even though procreation was anathema<sup>47</sup> for the Cathars, "sexuality was tolerated, if not explicitly sanctioned" (Baigent et al. Holy Blood, Holy Grail 55). Baigent et al. interpret the accusation of unnatural sexual practices levelled against the Templars not as the practice of homosexuality, which was strictly forbidden by the Cathars, but as "birth control and abortion" (55). Citing J. T. Noonan's opinion on the matter, they assert that the "Manichaeans had long been involved in the use of various forms of birth control and were also accused of justifying abortion" (450). Furthermore, Runciman affirms that the Cathars "positively seemed to encourage sexual intercourse . . . a complete reversal of the Catholic view" (152).

The application of Tantraism to Magic, where one of its functions is to generate altered states of consciousness and enhance creativity, is well known. Colin Wilson remarks accurately that sexual energy serves as a stair way to new levels of power, utilized "to create new habit patterns of intensity", an intensity which can be used as a "ladder [for the individual] to ascend to still greater heights of intensity, focusing upon the illumination rather than upon the sexual pleasure" (The Occult 140). Pound, in "Religio", hints at this secret function of sex, which he considers the underlying factor in the mysteries of antiquity, pointing out that "for certain people the pecten cteis (sic) is the gate of wisdom" (56), and that "Paganism included a certain attitude toward; [sic] a certain understanding of, coitus, which is the mysterium" (Selected Prose 1909-1965 70). Furthermore, Pound believed the sexual element to be the underlying factor in the cult of Amor or Eleusis utilized by those responsible for the conspiracy of intelligence for the initiation of a new state of

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<sup>47</sup>To a certain degree, in fact only the Parfaits were sworn to celibacy.



consciousness. Pound celebrated paganism and the chthonic esoteric tradition because the latter identified the sexual principle with the "marvellous vital principle infused by invisible Divinity into manifest nature" (Selected Prose 55), that is, identified the sexual element with the divine principle itself. Yeats, in the first edition of A Vision, indicates that he is probably aware of the nature of Pound's mysterium, stating that "I have not even dealt with the whole of my subject, perhaps not even with what is most important, writing nothing about the Beatific Vision, little of sexual love" (xiii). In the second edition of A Vision, Yeats declares, though, that "sexual love becomes the most important event in life" (88).

The ritualistic use of Tantraism, or the glorification of "Eros", is a common element between the Cathars and the Order of the Knights Templar;<sup>48</sup> moreover, it constitutes a link between the Cathars and the troubadours. In fact, in the ensuing poetical tradition, the troubadours and Cathars became almost indistinguishable. Surette points out that both Pound and Yeats were aware of the conspiratorial mission of the troubadours and of their connection with Catharism: "Thanks to Aroux, by the time Pound joined Yeats's circle of 'excited reveries,' the notion that the troubadour poets were Albigensian heretics and therefore initiated in the secret doctrine was already standard belief in occult circles" (Birth of Modernism 49). Furthermore, Pound identifies the troubadour movement with the chthonic tradition and affirms that "the cult of Eleusis will explain not only general phenomena but particular beauties in Arnaut Daniel or in Guido Cavalcanti" (59). Moreover, Pound suggests in "Terra Italica" that the secret of understanding Catharism lies in the Eleusinian elements which had "persisted in the very early Church" (58). Baring and Cashford assert that the Cathar-troubadours<sup>49</sup> worshipped the feminine principle and "began to free

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<sup>48</sup>The Knights Templar and the Cathars flourished and perished almost in parallel. Ean Begg, in The Cult of the Black Virgin outlines the important similarities between the Templars and Cathars (pp. 93-108). For an interesting comparison between them, see Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, Holy Blood, Holy Grail.

<sup>49</sup>Graves stresses the connection between the troubadours and the matriarchal lineage and asserts that "women's gradual restoration to moral responsibility and freedom of

sexuality and eroticism from guilt" (637). Rene Nelli, quoted in Berman's Coming to our Senses, declares that

the love lyric and Cathar practice are sister phenomena, daughters of a common milieu. . . . The entire region of Lanquadoc was soaking in the same set of ideas for something like two hundred years, and it is inevitable that troubadours and Cathars were au courant with each other's mode of expression. This . . . courtly love was one of Catharism's social forms. (209)

Thus, we may assume that the troubadours were immersed in Cathar thought; that they formed part of the ancient chthonic esoteric tradition; and that they had as a mission<sup>50</sup> the spreading of the feminine state of consciousness which, through the ritualistic use of Eros, allowed human beings to comprehend their divine nature, enhance their potentials and creativity, and become masters<sup>51</sup> of their own selves.

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choice in love--though the priesthood was still withheld from them--came with the romantic Troubadour movement" ("The Bible in Europe" 58).

<sup>50</sup>The belief in the conspiratorial mission of the troubadours and their alliance with Catharism have been examined by many scholars, such as, Rossetti, in Disquisition on the Antipapal Spirit Which Produced the Reformation (1832), Aroux, Clef de la Comedie anti-catholique de Dante Alighieri, pasteur de l'eglise albigeoise dans la ville de Florence, affilie a l'ordre du Temple (1856), Rougemont, Love in the Western World, (1938).

<sup>51</sup>Kenneth Grant, in Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God, provides insight into the potentialities of sex, and how sex was used to dominate human potential and creativity: "Sex constituted one of the greatest problems to governments and rulers during the Osirian epoch [patriarchal or primary period], because the ruling cliques were dimly aware that the sexual element had an obscure connection with individual creative potential. If allowed to manifest, this potential inevitably asserts its sovereignty and refuses to comply with the artificial standards of morality designed to enslave it. By enslavement--one potent factor of which was the institution of marriage--the sex instinct was blocked on a massive scale. It formed a reservoir of energy which the priests and rulers drained in order to bolster their positions in society and the state" (197). Begg, commenting on the Cathar and troubadour attitude toward the institution of marriage, states that "although both marriage and fornication were qualified as 'adultery', extra-marital union, undertaken freely, was preferable to the conjugal bond. It might even symbolize the return of the soul to its spirit after death. Nelli states categorically that Cathars and troubadours were perfectly in agreement that true love--from the soul--purified from the false love associated with marriage" (137). Furthermore, Runciman asserts that the "Cathars frankly admitted that they



Thus, if we accept this hypothesis, we can understand the eagerness of the male-dominated Church to suppress the rising femininity or subjectivity in twelfth century southern France.

### **The Revival of the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition and the Hidden God**

By 1330, the flame of intellectual development and heretical thought was extinguished in Lanquadoc. Meanwhile, Constantinople and Florence<sup>52</sup> were experiencing a cultural renaissance. In spite of the severe blow that Constantinople suffered in 1204,<sup>53</sup> the last two centuries, before its final subjugation to the Turks in 1453, were marked by a brilliant cultural renaissance which engendered a Hellenistic revival and cultivated the ground for a magical revival in the fifteenth century and the Renaissance in the sixteenth century. Runciman, commenting on the Byzantine empire's last two centuries, affirms that "at no other epoch was Byzantine society so highly educated and so deeply interested in things of the intellect and the spirit" (The Last Byzantine Renaissance 2). Furthermore, Runciman stresses that the cultural background of the Byzantine empire was thoroughly Greek, since "the language was Greek, their literature written in Greek and the works of the ancient Greek world were still studied and admired" (15). Overall, as Runciman states, "the last Byzantine renaissance was essentially a Greek renaissance" (24).

However, this Greek renaissance, perceived from another perspective, reveals the traits which characterize the chthonic esoteric tradition, or Pound's conspiracy of

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preferred casual debauchery to marriage, because marriage was a more serious affair, an official regularization of a wicked thing" (152).

<sup>52</sup>According to Steven Runciman, twelve century Florence was "a great heretic center" (The Medieval Manichee 127), and that during the Albigensian crusade many Catharist refugees found shelter there (128).

<sup>53</sup>Four years before the commencement of the Albigensian crusade, the knights of the Fourth crusade, under the auspices of Pope Innocent III, invaded and destroyed Constantinople, bringing its Church under papal authority. It was recovered in 1261.

intelligence, that is, an emphasis on subjectivity or individuality, and an interest in the essence and the spirit of progress rather than on the word and the spirit of authoritarianism that the Church of Rome cultivated. In Byzantium, mysticism<sup>54</sup> was encouraged and generally accepted by its Church. Furthermore, Runciman points out that even occultism "flourished in every period of Byzantine history. . . . Nearly all of [the Byzantine scholars] were fascinated by the Pythagorean attitude to numbers" (The Last Byzantine Renaissance 13).

Byzantium's most renowned scholar, Georgios Gemistos Plethon,<sup>55</sup> was certainly the epitome of radical thought in the last two centuries of the empire. Plethon was a Platonist who dreamed of a pagan revival. In his radical treatise, On the Laws,<sup>56</sup> Plethon proposed "a total rejection of Christianity in favour of a new 'Hellenic' religion, incorporating the pantheon of ancient Greek gods and based on a theological and ethical system derived mainly from Plato but also from Zoroaster" (Nicol, The Last Centuries of Byzantium 363). Plethon, despite his heretical ideas, was greatly esteemed in Byzantium and, as Runciman states, "had the empire survived, he might have had disciples to carry on his message" (The Last Byzantine

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<sup>54</sup>The Byzantine mystics or "Isihastes" (Quietists), among whom Grigorios Palamas and his follower, Nicholas Cabasilas, are the most renowned, believed that "through intense contemplation, for which certain exercises provide a helpful prelude, they could rise to a state of mystical ecstasy in which they could make contact with the divine" (Runciman, The Last Byzantine Renaissance 45). This Gnostic desire for direct union with the divine or with the essences of God was incorporated into the credo of the Eastern Church in 1351, and was known as the doctrine of the Energies, denounced as heretical by the Church of Rome.

<sup>55</sup>Pound identifies Plethon as one of the exponents of the cult of Amor or Eleusis, that is of the chthonic esoteric tradition. Tryphonopoulos considers Plethon as a "carrier of the 'celestial tradition' to the west" and indicates that Pound in the Cantos makes seven references to Plethon.

<sup>56</sup>On the Laws was never published and is preserved only in fragments. After the death of Plethon, it was burned by the Patriarch Gennadius (Georgios Scholarios) due to its heretical content.



Renaissance 79). However, Plethon<sup>57</sup> succeeded in transmitting his heretical ideas and in winning disciples in Florence, which he visited in 1439 together with the Byzantine emperor Ioannis VIII and other delegates in order to participate in a Council<sup>58</sup> that would decide the union between the Eastern and Western Church. Florence proved to be a fertile ground for Plethon's heretical seeds for, after a series of lectures on Plato, Plethon succeeded in inciting the enthusiasm and passion of Cosimo de Medici for Platonism and esotericism. McIntosh argues that "the Gnostic and Neoplatonic ideas" of Plethon kindled in Cosimo the desire for "Hermetic and Neoplatonic literature" (30). Because of Plethon's influence, Cosimo established in Florence the Platonic Academy, which proved to be responsible for the revival of the esoteric tradition.

When the sun of the Byzantine empire set in 1453, Florence was flooded by Byzantine refugee scholars; as Runciman states, "it was from these scholars, these Platonicians and Aristotelians alike that the men of the Renaissance learnt most of their philosophy" (The Last Byzantine Renaissance 102). Thus, fifteenth-century Florence became the perfect nest to hatch the Church-suppressed esoteric tradition. In 1460, the discovery<sup>59</sup> of the Hermetic writings and their subsequent translation into Latin by Marsilio Ficino<sup>60</sup> in 1463 can be considered a landmark in the history of the esoteric tradition, since these writings rekindled the nearly extinguished esoteric flame, restored in the minds of the Renaissance philosophers human beings' suppressed individuality and dignity, and finally created a magical revival. Frances

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<sup>57</sup>Plethon was not an official delegate to the council of Florence; he joined the emperor "partly out of a sense of duty and partly for the ride to Italy, for he had no objection to bridging the cultural gap between Greeks and Latins" (Nikol 371).

<sup>58</sup>The Union of the Churches was signed on July 5, 1439. It was rejected, however, by the clergy and citizens of Constantinople.

<sup>59</sup>Leonardo of Pistaia, a monk from Macedonia, discovered the Hermetic writings in manuscript form at a monastery on Mount Athos, and presented them to Cosimo de Medici.

<sup>60</sup>(1433-1499). Ficino, as John Montgomery asserts was the "soul of the Platonic Academy of Florence" (Cross and Crucible 93).

Yates asserts that "the extraordinary lofty position assigned to Hermes Trismegistus in this new age rehabilitated Egypt and its wisdom, and therefore the magic with which that wisdom was associated" (Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition 19).

The writings of the Thrice-Greatest Hermes comprise mostly<sup>61</sup> a gnostic document which stresses above all the need for a direct inner experience with the divine through initiatory revelation; it also emphasizes the doctrine of the divine anthropos and the significant status of humans, who are considered divine beings emanating directly from the divine source and not from the maker of the material universe. The first tractate, Poimandres, or Corpus Hermeticum, stresses that anthropos was created strictly in the image of the "Nous-Theos or Pater Apanton [Mind-God or Father of All] who is life and light, Male and Female", and who engendered anthropos "equal to itself and loved as its own creation" (11-12). Thus, as stated in Poimandres, anthropos was definitely not created by Ialdabaoth, since Ialdabaoth was also created by the same divine power that engendered anthropos, and whose preference was to be "the chief formative power of the seven Demiourgic Potencies of the sensible world" (11). Moreover, echoing the Naassene doctrine, the Hermetic writings state that "anthropos is a mortal God on earth, while the Heavenly God is an immortal anthropos" (156-57). Through self-knowledge human beings could rediscover their divine nature and thus unite with the divine source. Hermes teaches his son, Tat, that "he who knows himself goes toward himself . . . you are light and life like God the Father of whom Man was born. If therefore you learn to know yourself as made of light and life . . . you will return to life" (29). Furthermore,

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<sup>61</sup>The Corpus Hermeticum, or Poimandres, is clearly a dualistic Gnostic treatise. Asclepius, however, presents more or less a pantheistic doctrine where the material universe is considered the manifestation of the divine source and not the product of an evil demiourgos. Thus, it is probable that the Hermetic writings form a compilation of various spiritual teachings by a number of authors. And yet, all teachings agree that human beings should transcend the material body in order to reach the divine source which is both within and without, as for instance Jesus, in the Gnostic tractate of "The Gospel of Thomas", indicates.



the Hermetic writings stress the idea of human free will; anthropos developed his/her material body not as a result of sin, but of his/her own free will in order to become more "efficient and able to the accomplishment of a certain definite task" (29).

Thus, the message drawn from the Hermetic writings is clearly pagan. The process of initiation these writings reveal recalls the ecstatic experiences of the early shamans and probably displays the hidden creed that the chthonic mysteries of antiquity utilized in order to promote individual creativity which, through the means of theurgy,<sup>62</sup> would lead the initiate to divine union and regeneration. In other words, this process reflects humanity's instinctual yearning to recover the holistic state of consciousness which was disrupted by the powerful but necessary emergence of the masculine principle.

Yates affirms that "magic had never died out during the Middle Ages, in spite of the efforts of the ecclesiastical authorities to exercise some check over it and to banish its more extreme forms" (Bruno 57). In fact, magic, during the fifteenth century, was practised by renowned scholars<sup>63</sup> such as Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Giordano Bruno.<sup>64</sup> These scholars were not dabbling in magic just for entertainment or individual ends. Magic for them was a serious study, a means of

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<sup>62</sup>Part of Corpus Hermeticum and Asclepius deals with practical magic or, as Yates calls it, "astral magic". The practical magic and the philosophical speculations of the Hermetic writings seem to be indispensable to each other, since the use of this form of natural magic could bring forth the desired result of unity with the divine. Yates, commenting on Ficino's commentary on Plotinus, states that Ficino justifies "the use of talismans and . . . the magic of Asclepius, on Neoplatonic grounds--on the grounds that the ancient sages and the modern users of talismans are not invoking devils, but have a deep understanding of the nature of the All, and of the degrees by which the reflection of the Divine Ideas descend into the world here below" (66).

<sup>63</sup>Tommaso Campanella is probably the last hermetic philosopher in Italy who came from the school that Ficino initiated in 1463. Meanwhile, the main exponents of the Hermetic tradition in Germany were Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1533) and Paracelsus (1493-1541). In England the Hermetic tradition was represented by the mathematician Dr. John Dee (1527-1608).

<sup>64</sup>For a detailed analysis on Ficino, Mirandolla, and Bruno's pursuit in magic, see Frances Yates Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, The Art of Memory and D. P. Walker Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella.

spiritual development, and a means of pursuing a religious creed that would reform or replace Christianity itself. Yates points out that "when Hermes Trismegistus entered the church, the history of magic became involved with the history of religion in the Renaissance" (Bruno 83). Referring to Ficino, who had incorporated magic in his Neoplatonic beliefs, Yates boldly affirms that his "was a religious magic, a revival of the religion of the world [Hermetic-Egyptianism]" (Bruno 82).

While Ficino practised natural magic, that is, sympathetic magic based on the law of correspondences between the macrocosm and microcosm, Mirandolla (1463-94) went a step further and became the first Renaissance magician to combine Hermeticism and the Jewish Cabala. For Mirandolla, magic was indispensable to religion and a necessary means of understanding and proving Christ's divinity. Indeed, as Mirandolla argues, "there is no science which gives us more assurance of Christ's divinity than magic and the Cabala" (qtd. in Yates, Bruno 112). Yates notes that Mirandolla's statement concerning Christ's divinity and magic is inexplicable. And yet, Yates accurately asserts that "the two theoretical [sic] contexts in which the two kinds of magic revive in the Renaissance--namely the Hermeticism and Cabala--are both gnostic in origin" (108). Therefore, we may assume that Mirandolla, thinking in Gnostic terms, believed that magic could prove the divinity of the Gnostic Christ and not of the historical Christ. If we assume that Mirandolla had in mind the Gnostic Pauline Christ, then his bold statement makes absolute sense, since it is the mission of the Cabala and hermeticism to make the individual aware of the divine principle or son of the divine anthropos that lies within the human soul. In 1487 Pico was condemned for his heretical ideas by Pope Innocent VIII and was forced to renounce his liberal convictions. Strangely, the successor of Innocent VIII, Pope Alexander VI,<sup>65</sup> absolved Mirandolla, praised him for his esoteric wisdom, and

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<sup>65</sup>A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics notes that Alexander (1492-1503) was "a man of unusual talents, but charged with immoral character" (12). Particularly, the frescoes of Appartamento Borgia, painted by Pinturicchio, reveal Alexander's



described him as the "faithful son of the Church" (qtd. in Yates, Bruno 114). Thus, Mirandolla may have been a fervent believer in the early Gnostic Christianity propagated by Paul and misunderstood by the early Church Fathers, who were not aware of the esoteric solar connections between Christianity and the solar mystery cults of antiquity. Mirandolla wanted to reform Christianity by reviving its esoteric foundations that propagated the belief in the divinity of the Gnostic Christ or immortal principle in human beings, which could be invoked through ritualistic magic and the Cabala. As Yates affirms, "Pico's practical Cabala is an intensely religious and mystical version of conjuring" (Bruno 108). Mirandolla was probably not conjuring spirits and demons, but the immortal principle that resides within the human soul, that is, the son of the divine anthropos. Bruno's philosophical and religious ideas coincided with those of Ficino and Mirandolla. He was a Hermetic philosopher, well versed in the Cabala and in the esoteric solar nature of Christianity. And yet, Bruno surpassed his predecessors in boldness of spirit and speech. Yates points out that "Bruno's truth is neither Orthodox Catholic nor Orthodox Protestant truth; it is Egyptian<sup>66</sup> truth, magical truth" (239). True to his Hermetic ideal Bruno believed in an infinite animated universe where the divinity "is not far distant but within us, for its centre is everywhere, as close to dwellers in other worlds as it is to us. Hence we should follow not foolish and dreamy authorities but the regulated sense and the illuminated intellect. The infinite universe is a conception more worthy of God's majesty than that it should be finite" (qtd. Yates Bruno 299). Furthermore, Bruno defended Copernicus' theory of heliocentricity, which reflected his own conviction in the supremacy of the esoteric solar tradition. Bruno believed that his hermetic

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knowledge of the esoteric solar tradition. For a more detailed analysis see Yates Bruno, and F. Saxl "The Appartamento Borgia".

<sup>66</sup>By Egyptian truth, Bruno and the Neoplatonist philosophers that preceded him meant the philosophical teachings and magic expounded in the Hermetic writings. At that time the Neoplatonists did not know that the Hermetic writings were mostly Gnostic in nature, but they believed that they represented solely the religious teachings of the ancient Egyptians.

mission was to lead Christianity back to its original Egyptian solar roots. Until his tragic death,<sup>67</sup> Bruno believed that he was wrongly accused of heresy, since his only transgression or sin was his desire to reform Christianity, not reject it altogether. Like Mirandolla and Ficino, Bruno believed in the supremacy of the Gnostic "Father of All", but his convictions about Christ did not coincide with those of the Church. Bruno's heresy was that he believed in the divine powers of human beings, and that Christ represented the son of the divine anthropos, a Christ that by no means could be embodied in a historic personality. Yates hints at this idea, stating that

Bruno's faith as he emphasises later to the Inquisitors, he considers to be Catholic and orthodox as concerning the Father or the mens [sic] [anthropos]; he confesses that he is unorthodox as regards the Son; his view of the Third Person as the anima mundi would have been orthodox to many Christian Renaissance Neoplatonists. (351)

The contribution of Renaissance "magicians" to the development of human consciousness was tremendous. In a typically Epicurean and Gnostic manner, they turned to the transformation of the self through Hermeticism and the Cabala as the only means for the individual to achieve spiritual and political freedom. Bruno particularly expresses this gnostic disposition by stressing the need for a turning inward toward self-actualisation: "if we purify the divine within us, then it will not be hard to pass from this transformation in the inner world to the reformation of the sensible and outer world" (qtd. Cassirer The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy 122). Berlin, in Four Essays on Liberty, further elaborates on this humanist Renaissance position, which reflects the esoteric tradition, stating that the idea of liberty reflected at that time "the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master . . . to be a subject, not an object, to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes" (131). Thus, the Christian concept that human salvation and liberty depend on God's grace and can be sought only in an after-death state of existence, is now

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<sup>67</sup>He was burned at the stake on February 17, 1600.



replaced by the belief in the divinization of human beings and in the magical conviction that through an individual initiatory process, human beings could experience an altered state of consciousness and unite with the divine.

### **Rosicrucianism and the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition**

Fourteen years after Bruno's execution, an anonymous treatise called Fama Fraternitatis<sup>68</sup> was published in Cassel, Germany, revealing the existence of a secret society of the Rosicrucians allegedly founded by Christian Rosencreutz.<sup>69</sup> In 1615, Fama was followed by another anonymous manifesto called Confessio,<sup>70</sup> which expounded in more detail than Fama the objectives of the society. Rosicrucianism has been explored thoroughly by many scholars;<sup>71</sup> what I shall briefly argue here is my hypothesis that the two Rosicrucian manifestos that appeared in 1614 and 1615, are texts of the chthonic esoteric tradition.

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<sup>68</sup>The full title of this treatise is The Legend of the Worthy Order of the Rosy Cross. Fama was written in German; before its publication in 1614, circulated in manuscript form from 1610.

<sup>69</sup>According to Confessio, Rosencreutz was born in 1378, travelled to the East where he acquired esoteric wisdom, and returned to Germany where he initiated the Fraternity of the Rose and Cross. Rosencreutz died in 1484 and his tomb remained hidden until 1604. The discovery of Rosencreutz's vault signifies, according to Fama, the dawn of a new era in human civilization. Yeats, in "The Body of the Father Christian Rosencrux", identifies the body of Rosencreutz with the suppressed imagination or antithetical period which eventually will rise from the "tomb of criticism" (241) and initiate a new era in the human history.

<sup>70</sup>Confessio was written in Latin; its full title is The Confession of the Laudable Fraternity of the Most Honourable Order of the Rosy Cross, Written to All the Learned of Europe.

<sup>71</sup>For an exhaustive analysis of the historical milieu during which the manifestos appeared, see Yates's The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, wherein are also included Thomas Vaughan's translations of Fama and Confessio. Montgomery, in Cross and Crucible, examines in depth the relation of Johann Valentin Andreae's Chemical Marriage to the two Rosicrucian manifestos; Montgomery's second volume of Cross and Crucible contains in facsimile the Foxcroft English version of 1690 of Andreae's Chemical Marriage. See also Waite, The Real History of the Rosicrucians, where Fama and Confessio are included, as well as Andreae's Chemical Marriage in an Abridged Form, and Macintosh's The Rosicrucians, where the German esoteric tradition is thoroughly examined.

The Rosicrucian manifestos openly declare to overthrow papal authority, to re-establish the forgotten gnosis and faith in the divine powers of human beings, and finally to initiate a new age in the history of human civilisation. Fama, in a low tone, expresses discontent toward the rigid authority exercised by the representatives of patriarchal<sup>72</sup> religions, stating that had the Rosicrucian "brethren and Fathers . . . lived in this our present and clear light, they would more roughly have handled the Pope, Mahomet, scribes, artists, and sophisters" (243). In Confessio the tone changes; in more harsh and bitter language, the Rosicrucians accuse the Pope and Mahomet of blasphemy and tyranny--"we do condemn the East and the West [Mahomet and Pope] blasphemers against our Lord Jesus Christ" (251)--and proclaim the end of the Papacy: "many godly people have secretly and altogether desperately pushed at the Pope's tyranny . . . whose final fall is delayed, and kept for our times, when he also shall be scratched in pieces with nails, and an end be made of his ass's cry, by a new voice" (Confessio 255).

In contrast to the Christian creed of submission to the authority of God in heaven and to the Pope on earth, the Rosicrucians, in a typically gnostic and chthonic manner, declared their conviction in the divinity of human beings and asserted that humans should "understand [their] own nobleness and worth, and why [they are] called Microcosmus, and how far [their] knowledge extendeth into Nature" (Confessio 238).

Thus, according to the Rosicrucian manifestos, papal "tyranny" will come to an end, a "new voice" will arise, and the "world shall awake out of her heavy and drowsy sleep, and with an open-heart, bare-head, and bare-foot, shall merrily and joyfully meet the new arising Sun" (Confessio 257). In the same gnostic spirit, the manifestos prophesy that "Europe is with child and will bring forth a strong child"<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>It is important to note that by repeatedly including Mahomet in their accusations, the Rosicrucian editors generally attack the patriarchal religions which are characterized by a strict monotheism and a surrender of the self to God.

<sup>73</sup>The archetype of the child-god is discussed separately in this study.





(Confessio 244), and that a door "shall be opened . . . to Europe (when the wall is removed) which already doth begin to appear, and with great desire is expected of many" (Confessio 245-46). An important question, which so far has evaded the attention of various scholars who have dealt with Rosicrucianism, concerns the nature of this child as well as the nature of the new sun or world order that will arise. Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves would probably have declared that Europe would give birth to a child of the Mother alone, that is, give birth to the esoteric philosophy related to the chthonic esoteric tradition, a tradition which metaphorically extols the suppressed child of the Great Goddess, Set, Lucifer or Satan. Montgomery and Mackey interpret the name Rosicrucian as a cryptograph denoting Rosicrucianism's alchemical and pagan character. Mackey explicitly asserts that the Rosicrucians

do not derive their name, like Rose Croix Masons, from the Rose and Cross, for they have nothing to do with the rose, but from the Latin 'ros', dew, and 'crux', the cross, as a hieroglyphic of light, which Mosheim explains as follows: "Of all natural bodies, dew was esteemed the most powerful solvent of gold; and the cross, in chemical language, is equivalent to light, because the figure of a cross + exhibits at the same time three letters, of which the words LVX, or light is compounded. Hence a Rosicrucian philosopher is one who, by the assistance of the dew, seeks for light, or the philosopher's stone". 417-18

Mosheim's statement reveals the chthonic character of the Rosicrucians, since the dew comes before the rising of the sun (emblem of the patriarchal religions) and is associated, according to Greek mythology, with the goddess Aurora,<sup>74</sup> who is responsible for the nourishment of nature. The chthonic character of Rosicrucianism becomes even more apparent in the emphasis given by the Fama to the sun or "divine light" which appears before the rising of the sun of our solar system; Fama states that "before the rising of the sun, there should appear and break forth Aurora, or some clearness, or divine light in the sky" (249). Fama's statement could be interpreted or

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<sup>74</sup>The goddess of Dawn and daughter of Hyperion.

restated thus: that before the breakthrough of the patriarchal religions, which actually glorified the sun of the solar system, there was the light of another sun, which was considered divine, the light of the sun Sirius,<sup>75</sup> identified by the Egyptians and the ancient world with the manifestation of the Son of the Great Goddess.

If my hypothesis that the two Rosicrucian manifestos belong to the chthonic esoteric tradition is correct, then naturally they would have stirred up some kind of response from the solar esoteric tradition. Indeed, the response was immediate and appeared in the form of an anonymous manifesto called The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz, published in Strasbourg in 1916. As it was later proved, the author of The Chemical Wedding was Johann Valentin Andreae, a Protestant theologian from Tübingen. Because The Chemical Wedding appeared only a year after the publication of Confessio, and because its hero was Christian Rosecreuz, it was generally believed that The Chemical Wedding formed a continuation of the first two manifestos, and that Andreae<sup>76</sup> was the founder of Rosicrucianism. Montgomery, in his two-volume study of Andreae, Cross and Crucible, proves that Andreae's Chemical Wedding is a distinct document and has no connection whatsoever with the Rosicrucian manifestos. Montgomery indicates that Andreae considered the Rosicrucian manifestos pagan, and that he wrote The Chemical Wedding in order to promote his own Christian-esoteric convictions and to "Christianize the [Rosicrucian] myth" (228). According to Montgomery, Andreae's

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<sup>75</sup>According to the esoteric tradition, Sirius is the "sun behind the sun" since in the summer months it rises a short while before the rising of the sun. Sirius is connected with the chthonic or Typhonian tradition and represents the child (set) or manifestation of the goddess of the seven stars (great bear or Typhon). The Naassennes also identify Sirius with the son of Adam or lesser bear, while Adam is identified with the great bear. See also Appendix II, "Occult Hermeneutics and Astronomy".

<sup>76</sup>Andreae (1586-1654) admits in his autobiography, published posthumously in 1849, that he was indeed the writer of The Chemical Wedding; he denied, though, categorically that he was the author of the first two manifestos.



concern was with the heart of the [Rosicrucian] myth. He recognized that at its deepest level the Fama and Confessio presented not a Lutheran--or even a Christian--theology, but a philosophy rooted in pagan sources. . . . [Rosicrucian philosophy was] an anthropocentric attempt to storm heaven's ramparts through occult wisdom, whereas the most fundamental doctrine of the evangelical Christian faith is that salvation comes only through God's descent to mankind and His death and Resurrection on behalf of those who cannot save themselves. 237

Furthermore, apart from the publication of The Chemical Wedding, Andreae, in order to turn people's attention away from the doctrines of the chthonic esoteric tradition, founded the "Societas Christiana" in 1618 which, "endeavoured to ameliorate religious, cultural, and literary ills exclusively through the power of the Reformation Gospel" (Montgomery 235). In order to provide his society with a myth analogous to that of the Rosicrucians, Andreae published a novel, Christianopolis (1619), where he diplomatically consents to the Rosicrucian claim for reform, but proposes, though, his own way which leads to the "Societas Christiana". Yates asserts that "the culture of the 'Societas Christiana' is evidently very like that of the city of Christianopolis, a scientific culture based on mathematics, and oriented towards technology and utility" (The Rosicrucian Enlightenment 153). With its alleged emphasis on dry reasoning and rigidity of mind, the culture of Societas Christiana meets the standards of the solar esoteric tradition. Yates further notes that the

'Societas', when developed, would become, like the city of Christianopolis, a group of mystical Christians contemplating the works of God in nature, but with a very practical hard core of scientific and technological expertise. Their main interests are directed, not towards 'loquacity', or the usual rhetorical studies, but towards applied mathematics. (153)

Yeats, in his essay "Christian Rosencrux", reacts to this mechanistic conception of life of the Christian mysticists and, like the Rosicrucian founders, prophesies that "this age of criticism is about to pass and an age of imagination, of emotion, of moods, of revelation, about to come in its place" (242). Furthermore,

talking about the artistic spirit which permeates the chthonic esoteric tradition, Yeats repeats the Biblical citation that "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit" ("Christisn Rosencrux" 243). Perhaps, Yeats's ingenious remark explains the secrecy and mystery which still surrounds the Rosicrucians.

As I have indicated so far in my discussion of the Knights Templar and the Cathars, any attempt on the part of the chthonic esoteric tradition to interfere in Church-established religious thought resulted in bloodshed. Similarly, the Neoplatonic school initiated by Ficino is a characteristic case of a futile attempt made on the part of the solar esoteric tradition to reform the religious status quo. The case of the Rosicrucian manifestos is another example of the interference of the chthonic tradition in the development of human consciousness. The writers of the Rosicrucian manifestos never revealed themselves and stand today as examples of the solitary artist voicing the nobleness of human beings and their power to change the world through gnosis and imagination.

### **Freemasonry and the Solar Esoteric Tradition**

After Rosicrucianism, the next important landmark in the history of the esoteric tradition is freemasonry. The origins of freemasonry are obscure and form a favourite subject of debate among scholars. Freemasons claim that their society is the most ancient in the world, and assume that their first Grand Master was king Solomon (Mackey, A Lexicon of Free-Masonry 444). The fact, though, is that the "present organization [of freemasonry] dates from the so-called 'revival' on St. John's Day, 1717, when four lodges in London formed the Grand Lodge of England, from which directly or indirectly all organized freemasonry of today derives" (Mackey, A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics 174). There is evidence,<sup>77</sup> however, that long

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<sup>77</sup>See Pick and Knight, The Pocket History of Freemasonry.



before 1717, there were masonic lodges in Edinburgh, Scotland,<sup>78</sup> and the earliest reference<sup>79</sup> to Freemasonry that has been discovered so far is that of the admission of Sir Robert Moray into the old Mary's Chapel Lodge of Edinburgh on May 20, 1641.

Yates suggests that it was probably Giordano Bruno's radical thought which engendered freemasonry in England:

Freemasonry does not appear in England as a recognisable institution until the early seventeenth century . . . but one cannot help wondering whether it might have been among the spiritually dissatisfied in England, who perhaps heard in Bruno's 'Egyptian' message some hint of relief, that the strains of the Magic Flute were first breathed upon the air. (Bruno 274)

De Quincey asserts that "The original Free-Masons were a society that arose out of the Rosicrucian mania, certainly within the thirteen years from 1633 to 1646 and probably between 1633 and 1640" (qtd. in Yates, Rosicrucian Enlightenment 209). Mackey, however, rejects categorically the conjecture that freemasonry is related to Rosicrucianism, and insists that even the masonic degree<sup>80</sup> of the Rose-Croix has no relation whatsoever with Rosicrucianism. However, if we accept De Quincey's hypothesis that freemasonry sprung up from "Rosicrucian mania", then we may

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<sup>78</sup>Baigent and Leigh in The Temple and the Lodge provide substantial evidence and prove that freemasonry was instituted by Templar refugees who settled down in Scotland after the dissolution of their Order in 1312. The hypothesis that freemasonry derives from the Knights Templar has also been proposed by Eliphas Levi in History of Magic. The freemasonic Rite of Strict Observance, derived from the freemason Baron Karl von Hunde, also narrates an incident of Templar infiltration in freemasonry which occurred when the Grand Master of the Temple, Pierre d'Aumont, with some other refugee Templars, at a chapter held on St. John's Day 1313, decided to perpetuate the Order of the Templars in Scotland. According to Mackey, freemasons pre-existed in Scotland, and the Templars became freemasons in order to "avoid persecution" (332).

<sup>79</sup>Another reference of admission prior to 1717 is that of Elias Ashmole, who joined a masonic lodge at Lancashire in Warrington on October 16, 1646. For more details, see B. E. Jones, Freemason's Guide and Compendium, and Baigent et. al., The Temple and the Lodge.

<sup>80</sup>It corresponds to the eighteenth degree of the Knight of the Pelican and Eagle and Sovereign Prince Rose Croix of Heredom.

assume that it developed under the auspices of Andreae's Christian Unions or "Societas Christiana".

In my view, freemasonry is the first well organized society in the Christian western world which expounds the philosophy of the esoteric solar tradition. In conformity to the principles of solar Christianity, the ethics of freemasonry "are based on pure morality [and on] the ethics of Christianity . . . its doctrines, the doctrines of patriotism and brotherly love . . . and its sentiments, the sentiments of exalted benevolence" (Mackey, A Lexicon of Freemasonry 159). Furthermore, freemasonry professes to exercise Christian piety and charity; it takes care of "needy brothers [and] for their dependants, educates orphans and insists upon duties of charity and benevolence" (Mackey, A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics 174). Commenting on the Christian nature of Freemasonry, Crowley,<sup>81</sup> who was a high-degree mason himself, asserts that

the Scottish Rite, the degrees of Knight Templar, Knight of Malta and others in England are definitely Christian, e.g. the point of one degree is the identification of prophet, priest and King, three in one, the Trinity of the Royal Arch, with Christ; and in the Rose Croix degree, Christ is recognized as the "corner stone" of earlier symbolism. (Confessions 697)

Moreover, Baigent et al., state that

freemasons and the Anglican Church have cohabited congenially since the beginning of the seventeenth century. . . . Some of the most important Anglican ecclesiastics of the last four centuries have issued from the lodge; some of the most eloquent and influential freemasons have issued from the ministry. (The Temple and the Lodge 16)

And yet, it seems that freemasonry's philosophical teachings and morality did not coincide fully with Christian dogma. On April 24, 1738, Pope Clement XII officially declared his opposition to freemasonry and threatened to excommunicate any Catholic

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<sup>81</sup>According to his autobiography, Crowley was initiated to freemasonry in Paris, at lodge 'Anglo-Saxon' Number 343, and received the highest degree (thirty-third) in 1900 in Mexico City.



who sought admission to a masonic lodge. Baigent et al., citing a letter<sup>82</sup> written by Pope Clement XII to an unknown correspondent, note that Clement XII believed that "masonic thought rests on a heresy we had encountered repeatedly before--the denial of Jesus' divinity" (Holy Blood, Holy Grail 184). The Pope also expresses his belief that freemasonry forms a secret<sup>83</sup> society whose "masterminds . . . are the same as those who provoked the Lutheran Reformation . . . [and] who, through the ages, have dedicated themselves to subverting the edifice of Catholic Christianity" (185). Pope Clement refers indirectly to the heresy of gnosticism. The accusation that freemasons do not believe in Christ's divinity was also levelled at the Gnostics of the early Christian years. The denial of Christ's divinity is a conviction which reflects the esoteric solar tradition, which actually propounds a kind of gnostic esoteric Christianity, propagated first by Paul and later corrupted by the exponents of the historical Christ. Thus, we might conclude that since freemasons do not believe in the divinity of Christ (as interpreted and propagated by the Church), then, probably, they do believe in the Gnostic Christ, that is, in the divine immortal principle which exists in the soul of every human being. Indeed, as Crowley explicitly states in his autobiography,

This is [Freemasons' belief in the Gnostic Christ] in fact the real reason for the papal anathema; for freemasonry asserts that every man is himself the living, slain and re-arisen Christ in his own person. It is true that not one mason in ten thousand in England is aware of this fact; but he has only to remember his 'raising' to realise the fundamental truth of the statement. (699)

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<sup>82</sup>It was released and published in 1962. See Peyrefitte, "La Lettre Secrete". Baigent et al. further note that Clement's letter was "attached to a bull of excommunication issued by the Pope [Clement XII] on April 28, 1738" (Holy Blood, Holy Grail 461).

<sup>83</sup>The belief that freemasonry was responsible for the French Revolution and that it forms an underground secret society whose mission is the destruction of Christianity was propagated first by Barruel in 1797. We have to admit, though, that some of the masterminds of the French Revolution, such as Danton, Lafayette, and Philippe Egalite, were eminent freemasons. See also Robison's Proofs for a Conspiracy, and Webster's Secret Societies and Subversive Movements, and World Revolution.

## **Modern Conspiracies and the Chthonic Essence of the English Rosicrucian Society, Ordo Templi Orientis, Golden Dawn, and Crowley's Argenteum Astrum**

With the official establishment of Freemasonry in 1717, I hypothesize that the conflict between the advocates of the Mother and those of the solar patriarchal religion of Christianity developed into a full-fledged struggle; suddenly the world became a network of conspiratorial secret societies. In 1797, Abbe Barruel, in his four-volume Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism (discussed extensively in Surette's The Birth of Modernism), maintained that the French Revolution was the end result of a conspiracy, the aim of which was to destroy the Church and the monarchy. On July 14, 1856, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli warned the House of Commons that

a great part of Europe, the whole of Italy and France and a great portion of Germany, to say nothing of other countries, are covered with a network of these secret societies, just as the superficies of the earth is now being covered with railroads. And what are their objects? . . . They do not want constitutional governments; they do not want ameliorated institutions; they do not want provincial councils nor the recording of votes;--they want to change the tenure of the land, to drive out the present owners of the soil, and to put an end to ecclesiastical establishments. (qtd. in Roberts, The Mythology of Secret Societies 378)

Nesta Webster, in Secret Societies and Subversive Movements (1924), hypothesizes the existence of a cosmic conspiracy instigated by the "veritable powers of darkness [which are] in eternal conflict with the powers of light" (405). Webster's work influenced Pound; as Surette indicates, Pound was the "only leading modernist strongly drawn to the secret society and secret history hypothesis" (The Birth of Modernism 33). However, as Surette points out, Pound believed in a benign conspiracy, the mission of which was probably the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, the elevation of human consciousness to divinity, and not in a malicious conspiracy instigated by the powers of evil, seeking dominion over the earth, as the



uninitiated believed. Indeed, Pound believed in a "conspiracy of intelligence" (Guide to Kulchur 263) which prevailed through the centuries in direct opposition to the "Mithraic evil" (Selected Prose 55) or the "Cult of Atys and Asceticism" (58), that is, the solar patriarchal religion of Christianity. Pound associates this conspiracy of intelligence with the cult of Amor or Eleusis, that is, with the chthonic esoteric tradition.<sup>84</sup> In The Birth of Modernism, Surette points out that Pound's The Cantos can only be comprehended by those knowledgeable in the esoteric tradition, that is, "only by initiates" (36). He outlines the similarities between Yeats's A Vision and Pound's The Cantos, declaring the latter a "narratization of civilisation and culture within the ambience of occult historiography" (The Birth of Modernism 37). As we will discuss in a later chapter, Pound's The Cantos attempt to highlight and capture the essence or spirit which permeates the history of the conspiracy of intelligence, that is of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and demonstrate that it is a conspiracy of the divine will itself, or of the divine human principle which seeks liberation from the powers of inertia and repression. Characteristically, The Cantos culminate in the glorification of the feminine, intuitive, poetic principle embodied in the figure of the Great Goddess. The conspiracy hypothesis was not only an eccentricity of Pound's, but also of Yeats, Crowley, and Graves. Yeats wonders in his autobiography whether modern civilisation is a conspiracy of the powers of the subconscious, that is, of the esoteric tradition. His metahistorical<sup>85</sup> work, A Vision, reflects the conspiratorial spirit of a secret society, since Yeats declares that the work can only be understood by fellow initiates (Essays and Introductions xi) and that it proclaims the commencement of a new era that will liberate the poetic and divine genius that lies dormant in the human

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<sup>84</sup>In "Terra Italika", Pound expresses his conviction that "a light from Eleusis persisted throughout the Middle Ages and set beauty in the song of Provence [Troubadours] and of Italy" (Selected Prose 53).

<sup>85</sup>This term is used in relation to A Vision by Surette in The Birth of Modernism.

soul. Crowley openly declared his belief in the existence of an elitist society<sup>86</sup> of conspirators (Great White Brotherhood) which had as its purpose the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, the "raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of infinity" (Magick in Theory and Practice 4), as well as the destruction of any power<sup>87</sup> that opposed the fulfilment of the Great Work. The spirit of sedition against the patriarchal oligarchy of the Christian God marks Graves's The White Goddess, a work that is permeated with the same supernatural spirit that embraces A Vision, The Cantos, and The Book of the Law.

It would not be farfetched to say that Freemasonry became the repository of the esoteric tradition as well as the foundation upon which other secret societies developed in the modern era. In 1865, the eminent Freemason Robert Wentworth Little (1840-78) founded the Rosicrucian Society of England (SRIA).<sup>88</sup> Membership in the Rosicrucian Society was confined to Master Masons. It was Little's intention to differentiate his Order from the conservative nucleus of solar Freemasonry, so that he and the Order's members could study the more abstruse and radical aspects of occultism as well as Freemasonry's chthonic origins. According to Spence,<sup>89</sup> the

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<sup>86</sup>Crowley maintains in Magick Without Tears that "even the spiritually and morally as well as the physically destructive phenomena of our age must be parts of some vast all-comprehensive plan" (458).

<sup>87</sup>In Crowley's view, the enemies of the Great Work were Christianity and scientific materialism.

<sup>88</sup>The Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia alleges to be the first Rosicrucian Order in England. According to its mythology, Little established the order "upon the basis of old manuscripts allegedly found in Freemason's hall" (King, Modern Ritual Magic 28). According to Westcott, "Little availed himself of certain knowledge and authority which belonged to Brother Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie" (qtd. in Howe, The Magicians of the Golden Dawn 27). Mackenzie insisted that he was initiated into a German Rosicrucian society by an Austrian count named Apponyi; furthermore, as King claims, Mackenzie was also Hockley's student--a man who was associated with the magical school that Francis Barret initiated after the publication of The Magus in 1801. Mackenzie officially joined the Rosicrucian Society in 1872, became its secretary in 1874-5, and resigned in 1875.

<sup>89</sup>Spence quotes from "The Rosicrucian", a magazine that the Ros. Soc. published quarterly from 1868 to 1879.



Rosicrucian Society was "calculated to meet the requirements of those worthy masons who wished to study the science and antiquities of the craft and trace its successive developments to the present time; also to cull information from all the records extant from those mysterious societies which had their existence in the dark ages of the world, when might meant right" (An Encyclopaedia of Occultism 342). Dr. Westcott,<sup>90</sup> one of the leading members of the Rosicrucian Society, remarks in the "Rosicrucian" that some of the objectives of the Rosicrucian Society are "to facilitate the study of the systems of philosophy founded upon the Kaballah and the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus" as well as to "cultivate mental processes which are believed to induce spiritual enlightenment and extended powers of the human senses, especially in the direction of clairvoyance and clairaudience" (qtd. in Regardie, What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn 10). Westcott implies that the *raison d'être* of the Rosicrucian Society was to revive the Hermetic Gnostic spirit which had survived in the "dark ages of the world" through the "mysterious societies". The mysterious societies that Westcott refers to are probably the Rosicrucian societies that emerged in Europe in the early seventeenth century. Westcott ostensibly applies the adjective "mysterious" to the Rosicrucian societies in order to indicate the enigmatic existence of the Rosicrucian manifestos and the societies that ensued, and to stress their chthonic nature and affinities with the mystery cults of antiquity. It is certainly not a coincidence that Little appropriated the Rosicrucian legend for his Masonic offshoot.

Francis King, in Modern Ritual Magic, and Elic Howe, in The Magicians of the Golden Dawn, agree that the rituals of the English Rosicrucian Society resemble the rituals of the eighteenth-century German Rosicrucian Society of the Golden and

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<sup>90</sup>Dr. Westcott (1848-1925) joined the Ros. Soc. in 1880 and became its supreme Magus in 1891 when its previous leader, Dr. W. R. Woodman, died. Other eminent members of the Ros. Soc. were Rev. W. A. Ayton, Lord Lytton who, according to Howe, became the Order's Grand patron, William Carpenter, and Samuel Liddell Mathers.

Rosy Cross. Howe states that the English Rosicrucian Society "adapted the grade names of the late eighteenth century German Masonic order of the Rosy Cross" (27), and concludes that "it is possible that whatever Little unearthed originated from that source" (27). McIntosh, relying on various original manuals of the Order of Golden and Rosy Cross, writes that its aim was

to make effective the hidden forces of nature, to release nature's light which has become deeply buried beneath the dross resulting from the curse, and thereby to light within every brother a torch by whose light he will be able better to recognise the hidden God . . . and thereby become more clearly united with the original source of light. (The Rosicrucians 13-4)

The objectives of the German Rosicrucian Society reveal its chthonic character as well as its subversive disposition toward established patriarchal creeds. Additionally, McIntosh claims that the "reference to light which has been buried in dross as a result of a primal curse, or fall, could easily have emanated from one of the Gnostic sects of the early Christian era" (94). Furthermore, the "curse" might refer to humanity's Fall, but as we have already shown, in occult terminology the Fall is interpreted as the suppression of the chthonic cults of the Mother by the dominant patriarchal creeds. In the same spirit, the "hidden God" is the Gnostic Christ or feminine principle which lies latent in the human soul and is suppressed by patriarchal rule.

After the death of Little in 1878, Dr W. R. Woodman became the Supreme Magus of the English Rosicrucian Society. In 1888, Dr Woodman, along with Mathers and Dr Westcott, for reasons that are not yet, officially, clear, announced<sup>91</sup> the existence of a "very ancient and universal Rosicrucian society" (qtd. in Howe, The Magicians of the Golden Dawn 46) that had allegedly existed through the ages, and declared that they had in their possession some original manuscripts of the Order as

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<sup>91</sup>At a meeting of the Rosicrucian Society on October 11, 1888, Westcott indirectly announced the existence of the Golden Dawn. A second announcement was made by Mathers in the June 1889 issue of the Theosophical magazine Lucifer.



well as an authorization from Rosicrucian initiates in Germany to commence a charter of that ancient Order in England. Thus the Isis-Urania Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn came into existence. Even though the history of the Golden Dawn has been thoroughly explored by many scholars, still there is much controversy about its origins.<sup>92</sup> Yeats states in his autobiography that "the foundation of this society [Golden Dawn] . . . remains almost as obscure as that of some ancient religion" (341). What is an indisputable fact, though, is that the Order of the Golden Dawn constitutes a continuation of the English Rosicrucian Society, with objectives similar to those of the Rosicrucian Society and the German Rosicrucian Society of the Golden and Rosy Cross. The Golden Dawn fulfilled,<sup>93</sup> in a way, the expectations of the Rosicrucian Society and developed into a truly magical society, that is, a society which dealt successfully with the more abstruse and practical aspects of occultism. According to its history lecture, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was directly related to the "Fratres Roseae Crucis of Germany, whose association was founded by one Christian Rosenkreutz about the year 1398 AD." and aspired to teach its Hermetic students "the principles of Occult Science and the Magic of Hermes" (qtd. in Regardie, The Golden Dawn 15).

A perfunctory study of the rituals of the Golden Dawn reveals that its metaphysical aspirations reflect those of the Gnostic chthonic esoteric tradition. According to the official teachings of the Golden Dawn, as revealed by Dr. Regardie and Crowley in The Golden Dawn and The Equinox respectively, the purpose of the Golden Dawn was to lead the aspirant to a level of "More than Human",<sup>94</sup> enable

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<sup>92</sup>The best accounts concerning the origins of the Golden Dawn are Regardie, The Golden Dawn, and What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn, Howe, The Magicians of the Golden Dawn, and King, Ritual Magic in England.

<sup>93</sup>The Rosicrucian Society of England, in spite of its intention to deal with theurgy, has been criticized for ineffectiveness and ignorance to matters concerning practical magic. See for instance the harsh and hostile criticism of Waite in The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross.

<sup>94</sup>This extract is taken from the obligation given by the aspirant in the Adeptus Minor ceremony; the aspirant swears that "with the Divine permission I will, from this day

him/her to communicate with his/her "Higher Self",<sup>95</sup> and thus achieve the Great Work. In other words, the purpose of the Golden Dawn was to expand human consciousness through a series of learning experiences<sup>96</sup> in such a way as to help the aspirant achieve contact with the Gnostic Christ or immortal divine principle that lies within the human soul. In his commentary on Wilhelm's translation of The Golden Flower, Jung writes that through the process of initiation or magical practices, "[humanity's] attention . . . is brought back to an inner, sacred domain, which is the source and goal of the soul and which contains the unity of life and consciousness. The unity once possessed has been lost, and must now be found again" (103). Echoing Jung, Regardie asserts that it was the mission of the Golden Dawn "to assist the candidate by his aspirations to find that unity of being which is the Inner Self, the pure essence of Mind" (What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn 65).

Yeats and Crowley, both eminent members of the Golden Dawn, believed the Order to be of "extreme antiquity" (Yeats, "Is the Order of Roseae Rubae et Aureae Crucis to Remain a Magical Order?"). Furthermore, Yeats, judging from "internal evidence", asserts that the rituals of the Golden Dawn "were in substance ancient though never so in language unless some ancient text incorporated" (Autobiography

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forward, apply myself to the Great Work--which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my higher and Divine Genius" (qtd. in Regardie, The Golden Dawn 230).

<sup>95</sup>According to Frater Ani asig, 375, "the central concern [of initiation and communication with the Higher Self or Holy Guardian Angel] is invariably enlightenment, of awakening to an underlying identity. It comports the transcendence of the limitations of reason and duality . . . the awareness that consciousness goes beyond the restrictions of the apparently human" ("Khabs", Vol. III, No. 3)

<sup>96</sup>Some of the learning experiences include meditation, yoga exercises, dream control, and the assumption of a god form. Sexual magic, as a technique of acquiring altered states of consciousness, even though familiar, was not applied, officially at least, by the members of the Golden Dawn. King admits that "a certain amount of tantric theory and (non-sexual) practice was incorporated into the order's teachings" (Tantra 77); and again, "it will seem apparent . . . that the polarity concepts of Tantra bear at least a passing resemblance to aspects of the variety of quabalistic theory taught in such occult societies as the Golden Dawn" (32).



341). Crowley believed that the Golden Dawn was instrumental to the Great White Brotherhood<sup>97</sup> or Hermetic Brotherhood of Light which was responsible for transmitting through the ages the chthonic pre-Christian gnosis. According to Grant, "the rituals of the Order of the Rosy Cross (second Order of the Golden Dawn) are clearly tinged with traces of the Sabean or Draconian Star Cult" (Magical Revival 48), that is, with the chthonic tradition or Cult of the Mother Goddess. Indeed, the ritualistic titles appropriated by the Golden Dawn in its ceremonial system, of Kerux, Hegemon, Hiereus, Hierophant, Stolistes, and Dadouchos, originate from the Eleusinian mysteries of the Goddess. Regardie, commenting on the nature of the ceremonies conducted especially at the second inner order of the Golden Dawn, and referring to the Pastos or vault used for the Adeptus Minor ceremony, stresses the important role of the feminine principle in the Order as well as the Order's chthonic origins:

The psychologist no doubt will see in the Vault<sup>98</sup> a highly interesting and complex symbol of the Mother. Traces of this symbolism may be recognised in the fragments we inherit from the mystery cults of antiquity. It would be possible and quite legitimate to interpret the Vault in its entirety as referring to the Isis of Nature, the great and powerful mother of mankind, and an analysis of the separate parts of the Vault--the Venus door, the Pastos, the two Pillars--would subscribe to that view. For regeneration and the second birth have always as psychological states been associated with the Mother. And it may be recalled that the Neschamah or that principle of man which constantly strives for the superhuman shining heights, is always portrayed as a feminine principle, passive, intuitive, and alluring" (What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn 86).

Even though Pound was not officially a member of the Golden Dawn, his metaphysical and religious ideas coincide with those of the Golden Dawn. Crowley

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<sup>97</sup>Another offshoot of the G.W.B. was Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. According to Grant, "Blavatsky's intention in initiating her Society was, primarily, the destruction of Christianity in its historic as opposed to its 'eternal' form" (Magical Revival 8).

<sup>98</sup>For a better understanding of the Vault's symbolism, see Grant's essay "The Vault of the Adepts" in Hidden Lore.

and Yeats's belief in the Order's ancient lineage reflects Pound's belief in the cult of Amor or Eleusis or conspiracy of intelligence which, throughout human history, conspires to illuminate humanity and reinstate the feminine intuitive poetic principle to its proper state. Particularly, Pound's The Cantos display the central philosophical precept of the Golden Dawn, which was a "climbing towards the Light" (Yeats, "Manifesto").

After sixteen<sup>99</sup> troubled years of magical operations, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn splintered into various antagonistic fractions.<sup>100</sup> It seems that the main reason for the disintegration of the Order was Mathers' inability to establish contact with the Secret Chiefs<sup>101</sup> of the Third Order<sup>102</sup> of the Golden Dawn and receive the high grade-rituals necessary for the advancement of the initiates from the second to the third order. Crowley states in his autobiography that the "Secret Chiefs cast [Mathers] off" (197), and that "under Mathers the grades had become meaningless" (561). Grant asserts that Mathers

had lost contact with the Secret Chiefs from which a new current of occult knowledge was expected to flow. Members of the lower Grades had risen individually to the summit of the Second Order and there

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<sup>99</sup>That is up to 1904, when Waite decided to part from the triumvirate (Dr. Felkin, Brodie-Innes, Yeats)--which was established after Mathers' expulsion from the Order--and "throw overboard the old 'Magical' tradition which derived from Mathers and be free to pontificate about the Graces of the Spirit in his own inimitable fashion" (Howe, The Magicians of the Golden Dawn 255).

<sup>100</sup>For further information see present chapter on Yeats and Crowley, George Mills Harper Yeats's Golden Dawn, Howe The Magicians of the Golden Dawn, King Modern Ritual Magic, and Regardie What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn.

<sup>101</sup>The Secret Chiefs belonged to the mythology of the Order, and were allegedly supernatural entities and the Order's guiding spirits or representatives of the Great White Brotherhood or Brotherhood of Light or even Great White Lodge to which the Golden Dawn formed a part.

<sup>102</sup>The Third Order of the Golden Dawn consisted of the following Grades: Magister Templi 8=3, Magus 9=2, and Ipsissimus. The Second Order consisted of the Grades of Zelator and Theoricus Adeptus Minor 5=6, Adeptus Major 6=5, and Adeptus Exemtus 7=4. The First Order which was known as the Golden Dawn proper consisted of the Grades of Neophyte 0=0, Zelator 1=10, Theoricus 2=9, Practicus 3=8, Philosophus 4=7.



they remained, unable to advance for lack of initiated guidance. The ordeals had become empty formalities in the same manner as those of modern Freemasonry, and the congestion of members in the higher Grades proved a source of embarrassment to Mathers. As an Adeptus Exemptus (7=4) he had not crossed the Abyss.<sup>103</sup> (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 48)

In 1904, when Waite<sup>104</sup> requested to break away from the main body of the Golden Dawn and initiate his own Temple, Dr. Felkin and Brodie-Innes, on their part, consented to direct together the Temple of Stella Matutina,<sup>105</sup> a temple which remained faithful to the initial chthonic spirit of the Golden Dawn. Meanwhile, Dr. Felkin<sup>106</sup> undertook the mission to contact the Secret Chiefs. Howe testifies that it was Dr. Felkin's desire to "find the Secret Chiefs and continue [the operation of Stella Matutina] from that point" (255).

In 1904, Crowley, unaware of Dr. Felkin's attempts to communicate with the Secret Chiefs, succeeded, according to his own testimony,<sup>107</sup> in getting in touch with

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<sup>103</sup>According to Grant, the Abyss "metaphysically considered . . . is the Gulf between the phenomenal and the noumenal; the illusory and the real. Magically considered, the Oath of the Abyss means to make a willed effort to Cross the Abyss, or transcend the world of subject and object and resolve the antinomies of mundane consciousness. On the Tree of Life the Supernal Triad of Kether, Chokmah, and Binah, represents the Unity in Trinity above the abyss, where all opposites are reconciled. Crossing the Abyss is the most critical stage upon the spiritual path. If the Crossing is not achieved cleanly, insanity--temporary or permanent--results" (Magical Revival 214).

<sup>104</sup>Waite did not believe in the existence of the Third Order of the Golden Dawn, or even in the existence of magical powers, and wanted, in a way, to Christianize the Order. For further elaboration on Waite's contrivances, see present chapter on Yeats and Crowley, and Harper's Yeats's Golden Dawn.

<sup>105</sup>Stella Matutina or Morning Star is a title that in the arcane tradition suggests the dog-star Sirius, and is indicative of the chthonic affiliations of the Order. Yeats, who had declared his opposition to Waite's schemes in his 1901 manifesto, "Is the Order of Rosae Rubae and Aurae Crucis to Remain a Magical Order?", remained a faithful member of Stella Matutina until 1923.

<sup>106</sup>In pursuit of the Secret Chiefs, in 1906, Dr. Felkin travelled to Germany where he contacted Dr. Steiner. Dr. Steiner had been a general secretary of the Theosophical Society since 1902, founder of the Anthroposophical Society, and a member of the Ordo Templi Orientis.

<sup>107</sup>See Crowley's Confessions, The Equinox of the Gods, and the Equinox.

the representatives of the Third Order. Crowley allegedly established contact<sup>108</sup> with a messenger of the Secret Chiefs--a supernatural entity called Aiwass--who bestowed on Crowley the leadership of the Golden Dawn. According to Crowley, "the Secret Chiefs of the Third Order . . . had sent a messenger [Aiawass] to confer upon [him] the position which Mathers had forfeited" (Confessions 394).

According to Grant, "the link which Crowley established with Aiwass enabled him to rehabilitate the Golden Dawn and the contact brought with it the new current which Mathers had failed to transmit" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 48). The new current<sup>109</sup> that Crowley revitalized found expression in the Order of the Argenteum Astrum (the Silver Star, A A <sup>110</sup>) that Crowley initiated in 1907. The rituals of the A A were based on the rituals of the Golden Dawn, and the Order itself, according to Crowley, constituted the third and highest division of the Golden Dawn. The main objective<sup>111</sup> of the A A was to prepare its aspirants to "face the unspeakable terror of the Abyss which lies between Manhood and Godhead" (Gems from the Equinox 27); in other words, to help its aspirants achieve communication with their higher selves and thus accomplish the Great Work. Furthermore, Crowley's ambition in initiating the A A was to advance magic to the level of science, to

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<sup>108</sup>This alleged contact with the messenger of the Secret Chiefs brought forth The Book of the Law, Crowley's manifesto, celebrating the commencement of the new age of Horus. Furthermore, after the contact, Crowley claimed the Grade of Adeptus Major 6=5; Yeats, according to Harper, was advanced to the Grade of Adeptus Major on 16 October 1914, while had claimed the previous Grade of Adeptus Minor 5=6 on 10 July 1912. In 1909, Crowley claimed the Grade of adeptus Exemptus 7=4; on December 3 1909, he claimed the Grade of Magister Templi 8=3; in 1915 the Grade of Magus 9=2; and in 1921 the highest Grade of Ipsissimus 10=1.

<sup>109</sup>Also known as Thelemic Current or Current 93; 93 is the numerical value of the word Thelema (Will) and Agape (Love), the two key words that Aiwass transmitted to Crowley and which constitute the core of Crowley's metaphysical dogma.

<sup>110</sup>According to Grant, the "triangle of dots indicates that the Order is a secret society connected with the Ancient Mysteries" (Magical Revival 213)

<sup>111</sup>In Magick Without Tears, Crowley summarizes the policy of the A A as follows: "1. To assist the initiation of the individual. 2. To maintain a form of social order in which the adventure of initiation is easy--to undertake! 3. To work out the Magical Formula of the New Aeon" (461).



make occult science as systematic and scientific as chemistry; to rescue it from the ill repute which, thanks both to the ignorant and dishonest quacks that have prostituted its name, and to the fanatical and narrow minded enthusiasts that have turned it into a fetish, has made it an object of aversion to those very minds whose enthusiasm and integrity make them most in need of its benefits, and most fit to obtain them. (Gems from the Equinox 29-30)

In order to promote the interests of the A A , Crowley published from 1909 to 1913 the first ten numbers of the Equinox, a periodical which he considered "the first serious attempt to put before the public the facts of occult science . . . to treat the subject with scholarship and from the standpoint of science" (Confessions 604), as well as to "preserve the Sacred Tradition, so that a new renaissance might in due season rekindle the hidden Light" (Magick Without Tears 457).

The Sacred Tradition that Crowley wanted to sustain was the chthonic esoteric tradition, elements of which appeared unconcealed in the Order of the A A . Crowley compelled his students to "accept The Book of the Law<sup>112</sup> as the Word and the Letter of Truth, and the sole Rule of Life" (Gems from the Equinox 26). Furthermore, the aspirants of the A A should "accept the Crowned and Conquering Child as the Lord of the Aeon, and exert themselves to establish His reign upon Earth. They must acknowledge that 'the Word of the Law is THELEMA' and that 'Love is the Law love under Will'" (26).

The chthonic character of the Order is also revealed by the symbolism that Crowley appropriated; for instance, the sacred seal of the A A , that is, the seven-rayed star of Babalon (the Great Goddess) is suggestive of the Order's chthonic nature, since 'seven' is the number of the Great Goddess par-excellence, astronomically represented by the constellation of the Great Bear. Furthermore, the intrinsic meaning of the very name of the A A is indicative of its chthonic character. Grant mentions

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<sup>112</sup>For a more detailed elaboration of The Book of the Law, its ethics, and chthonic nature, see present chapter on Yeats and Crowley, as well as Grant's two Typhonian trilogies.

that Crowley originally explained the initials of Argenteum Astrum as ACTHP APGOS (aster argos, bright star in Greek), and comments that

[aster argos] is a corrupt Graeco-Coptic form of Argenteum Astrum (The Silver Star), yet it is the true occult key to the nature of the Order, which is not expressed by the correct Latin version of the Order [which is Argenteum Astrum]. Argos derives from Arg or Arca, the female generative power symbolized by the moon, the womb-shaped Argho used in the Mysteries, synonymous with the Queen of Heaven. (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 59)

Moreover, Grant associates the Silver Star with Sirius, a star which is considered the son and manifestation of the Great Goddess. Grant affirms that

Aster argos is the lunar or 'silver' star. The lunar component is represented by the eye of Isis [Great Goddess], and her star is Sirius the Dog-Star (set). The Order of the Silver Star is thus the Order of the Eye of Set, 'the Son behind the Sun [of our solar system], represented astronomically by the Star of Isis, which is Sothis (Sirius). (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 60)

Crowley was the first<sup>113</sup> to expound in plain terms the purpose of the chthonic esoteric tradition, which is to elucidate the nature of the Great Work, the accomplishment of which--i.e., "the passionate union of opposites" (Crowley, Little Essays Toward Truth 89)-- will precipitate a new age, the Age of Horus, which will propel humanity to transcend its present limited self-consciousness and embrace a cosmic<sup>114</sup> one. According to Grant, in Crowley's Cult of Thelema "the Great work entails the union of the five and the six (i.e., man and god, woman and man, beast and angel etc.) thus enabling humanity to attain cosmic consciousness" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 202). As we have indicated so far, the ceremonial, magical use

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<sup>113</sup>Crowley insists in his autobiography that the Secret Chiefs had exempted him from the vow of silence which bounds the initiate in the arcane mysteries (Confessions 404), making him indeed the first to write of the secrets of the arcane tradition.

<sup>114</sup>The term Cosmic Consciousness was first used by Richard Maurice Bucke in Cosmic Consciousness (1901).



of the tantric element was a well known technique among the initiates of the various esoteric schools for the acquisition of cosmic consciousness. Crowley's A A came upon this practice in 1912 when Theodor Reuss,<sup>115</sup> the Outer Head of the Ordo Templi Orientis, initiated Crowley<sup>116</sup> into the IX Grade<sup>117</sup> of the Order. Reuss authorized Crowley to become the Head of the British charter of the O.T.O., the *Mysteria Mystica Maxima*,<sup>118</sup> and upon the resignation of Reuss in 1922, Crowley became the supreme general Head of the O.T.O.

The O.T.O. was just another offshoot of the Great White Brotherhood or Brotherhood of Light<sup>119</sup> and therefore shared the same chthonic tradition with the

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<sup>115</sup>In 1905, after the death of Karl Kellner--the man who founded the O.T.O. in 1896--Theodor Reuss became the Outer Head of the Order until 1922, when he was succeeded by Crowley. Reuss, according to Crowley, was the Grand Master of Germany of the combined Scottish, Memphis and Mizraim Rites of Freemasonry" (Confessions 628).

<sup>116</sup>Crowley was aware of the existence of the O.T.O. prior to 1912, but considered it just another Freemasonic fraternity. King claims that around 1910, Crowley had been initiated by Reuss into the VI Grade (Modern Ritual Magic 122). In 1912, Reuss contacted Crowley because he thought that the latter had betrayed consciously, in The Book of Lies, the supreme secret of the O.T.O., that of sexual magic. In The Book of Lies Crowley urges the Adept to get "armed with his Magick Rood (and provided with his Mystic Rose)" (82). As for the supreme secret of the O.T.O., the Masonic periodical Oriflamme announced quite openly in 1912 that the O.T.O. "possesses the key which opens up all Masonic and Hermetic secrets, namely the teaching of sexual magic, and this teaching explains without exception all the secrets of Nature, all the symbolism of Freemasonry and all systems of religion" (qtd. in King, Modern Ritual Magic 119).

<sup>117</sup>For the structure of the O.T.O., see King, The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O. Of the ten degrees only the seventh, eighth, and ninth dealt with sexual magic.

<sup>118</sup>According to King, the Swiss section of the O.T.O. was called *Mysteria Mystica Veritas*, and the section that Dr. Steiner initiated in Berlin was called *Mysteria Mystica Aeterna* (The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O. 26).

<sup>119</sup>Indeed, in the 1917 manifesto of the Order, the O.T.O. is otherwise called the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light (King, Secret Rituals 10). Grant, revealing the chthonic nature of the Order of the Temple of the Orient (East), states that even though the East refers to sunrise, "the reference is not, however, to the physical sun, but to the Eye of Set, astronomically imaged by Sirius" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 60). Furthermore, the dove, which is the principal symbol of the Great Seal of the O.T.O., is "the feminine principle par-excellence, the Bird of the Goddess" (Grant, Hecate's Fountain 72).

English and German Rosicrucian Societies, the Golden Dawn, and the A A . According to the 1917 manifesto issued by Reuss, the O.T.O. is a "very ancient Order of sages, whose object is the amelioration and spiritual evolution of mankind by means of conquering error and aiding men and women in their efforts of attaining the power of recognizing the truth" (qtd. in King, Secret Rituals 9); moreover, the manifesto emphasizes the conspiratorial and subversive chthonic character of the order. Echoing the spirit of the Rosicrucian manifestos of 1614 and 1615, the document asserts that the Brotherhood of Light, or the Cult of Eleusis as Pound calls it, "has caused social and political revolutions and proved to be the rock of salvation in times of danger and misfortune. It has always upheld the banner of freedom against tyranny in whatever shape this appeared, whether as clerical or political or social despotism or oppression of any kind" (qtd. in King, Secret Rituals 9).

Crowley, being a 33 Mason<sup>120</sup> as well as an initiate of the Hermetic teachings of the Golden Dawn and the O.T.O., believed that he was the most suitable person to synthesize and represent the existing currents of the chthonic esoteric tradition in the twentieth century. In fact, Crowley succeeded in incorporating the teachings of The Book of the Law, and his eschatological beliefs about the commencement of the new age into the doctrines of the O.T.O. Grant states that the O.T.O. "became the first officially Masonic<sup>121</sup> body . . . to accept the Law of Thelema" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 63). Moreover, Crowley claims in his Confessions that the

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<sup>120</sup>Concerning Freemasonry's connection with the O.T.O. and its relationship to magical knowledge, Crowley dictates in a 1929 letter to Henry Birven that the "whole of the knowledge of the 33 of the reduced Rite is incorporated in the First seven degrees of the O.T.O. But the degrees superior to the seventh of the O.T.O. contain a vital magical secret [sex] at which the whole of Masonry of any rite certainly hints, though it is nowhere openly disclosed" (qtd. in Grant, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 63).

<sup>121</sup>We should clarify, though, that even though most of the members of the O.T.O. and the Golden Dawn were Masons who most of the time used Masonic rituals, nevertheless, the Orders in question (Golden Dawn, O.T.O., and A A ) had no other connection with Freemasonry; simply, they used Freemasonry as a front--as the Order of Weishaupt's Illuminati did in the eighteenth century.



instructions of the O.T.O. where in full accordance with the teachings of the Law of Thelema, and therefore he maintained them as models for the A A . Crowley asserts that the general idea of the rituals of the O.T.O was "of the right kind; and I was able to take them as a model. The main objects of the instruction<sup>122</sup> were two. It was firstly necessary to explain the universe and the relations of human life therewith. Secondly, to instruct every man how best to adapt his life to the cosmos and to develop his faculties to the utmost advantage" (Confessions 701).

In 1942, Crowley published Liber Oz (Liber LXXVII, The Book of Strength), which he considered the new manifesto of the O.T.O., propagating his world political scheme. Grant points out that "when Crowley took over the O.T.O. it was with the purpose of promoting individual liberty in accordance with the Law of Thelema. He incorporated the main tenets of this Law in Liber Oz . . . . In the space of a few hundred words he declared what he described as the political programme of the O.T.O in the Outer world" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 65). Crowley's political programme as revealed in Liber Oz revolves around 'Man' and reflects the belief of the chthonic esoteric tradition, expressed in Gnosticism, in the divinization of human beings, that is, in the divine anthropos entrapped in the realm of matter. When Crowley assumed the leadership of the O.T.O., he adopted as his motto "Deus est Homo", i.e., the human being is God. Moreover, Liber Oz's principal statement is the maxim, "There is no god but man".<sup>123</sup> Liber Oz was for Crowley humanity's

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<sup>122</sup>As we shall demonstrate in our discussion of Yeats's A Vision, Yeats expounds in his work the instructions of the O.T.O. that Crowley mentions in his autobiography. It is highly plausible that Yeats, being a faithful member of Stella Matutina until 1923, was familiar with the teachings of the O.T.O. since Dr. Felkin, the leader of Stella Matutina, was initiated by Crowley into the British section of the O.T.O. in 1914, a highly ironic fact since the members of Stella Matutina officially accused Crowley of being a black magician. See Howe's The Magicians of the Golden Dawn and King's The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.

<sup>123</sup>The connection with the ideology of the Order of the Illuminati is obvious. According to Nesta Webster, "the whole of Weishaupt's theory was in reality a new rendering of the ancient secret tradition [chthonic] relating to the fall of man . . . . Weishaupt looks to man alone for his restoration . . . . Thus in Weishaupt's masonic

declaration of independence from the bonds of reason and duality, a declaration of the apotheosis of the irrational and individuality as well as a declaration of war against the forces which, according to Crowley, generate unimaginative and passive individuals by suppressing their liberty and imagination. In his autobiography, Crowley, echoing Pound and Graves, refers to these forces, which he associates with modern commercial enterprise, as

the foul disease which is ravaging the United States, and has already destroyed almost every vestige of the political, religious and individual liberty which was the very essence of the original American idea. My spirit sunk under the contemplation of the irremediable calamity which threatens to engulf the whole of humanity since it is now an accepted principle of business to endeavour to make tyranny international, to suppress all customs of historical interest, and indeed everything which lends variety or distraction to human society in the interest of making a market of standardized products. (Confessions 819)

In a 1945 letter to Frater Saturnus [Karl Germer], Crowley warns about the

threat to the 'rugged American individualism' . . . by the bureaucratic crowd who want society to be a convict prison. 'Safety first'; there is no 'social insecurity', no 'fear for the future', no anxiety about [what] to do next--in Sing Sing. All the totalitarian schemes add up to the same in the end, and the approach is so insidious, the arguments so subtle and irrefutable, the advantages so obvious, that the danger is very real, very imminent, very difficult to bring home to the average citizen, who sees only the immediate gain, and is hoodwinked as to the price that must be paid for it. (qtd. in Grant, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 185)

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system the 'lost word' is 'Man' and its recovery is interpreted by the idea that Man should find himself again" (Secret Societies and Subversive Movements 215). Grant believes that the O.T.O. is a "continuation of the Order of the Illuminati inaugurated in the eighteenth century [May 1, 1776] by the Bavarian Adept, Adam Weishaupt" (Cults of the Shadow 131). Officially speaking the Order of the Illuminati was suppressed in 1786, but "Weishaupt and his inner circle of adepts continued to operate in secret behind the veil of Freemasonry, with which the Order had linked itself in 1778" (Grant, Magical Revival 11). In 1880, Leopold Engel revitalized the Order at Dresden, and in 1895, Dr. Karl Kellner perpetuated the Order under the name of Ordo Templi Orientis (Magical Revival 11).



Crowley's attitude toward the forces which suppress human liberty and individuality is succinctly summarized in the last statement of Liber Oz: "Man has the right to kill those who would thwart these [disclosed in Liber Oz] rights".

Because of its subversive and conspiratorial nature and its persecution by the solar patriarchal religions, the chthonic esoteric tradition's existence depended paradoxically on the main body of the solar esoteric tradition, which by 1717 was embodied in Freemasonry. As we have demonstrated so far, almost all of the members and founders of the chthonic esoteric offshoots were Freemasons, using Freemasonry as a front for their own clandestine, chthonic Weltanschauung. A typical example is that of the Order of the Illuminati whose founder, Weishaupt, infiltrated Freemasonry in 1776 by becoming a member of the Lodge of Theodore de Bon Conseil in Munich. Weishaupt thought that

if only the aim is achieved, it does not matter under what cover it takes place, and a cover is always necessary. For in concealment lies a great part of our strength. For this reason we must always cover ourselves with the name of another society. The lodges that are under Freemasonry are in the meantime the most suitable cloak for our high purpose, because the world is already accustomed to expect nothing great from them which merits attention. (qtd. in Webster, Secret Societies 219-20)

### **Kenneth Grant and the New Chthonic Current**

To conclude this chapter, we will show how, after Crowley's death, the chthonic esoteric tradition, under the direction of Grant, disentangled itself from the solar esoteric tradition and declared openly its objectives and wish to assist humanity in liberating the hidden god that lies within the human soul, and in attaining illumination, that is, cosmic consciousness. When Crowley died in 1947, the O.T.O. proceeded under the doubtful and feeble leadership of the Order's Grand Treasurer

General, Karl Germer.<sup>124</sup> Germer died in 1962 without proclaiming any official successor. As a result, the Heads of the four existing groups,<sup>125</sup> each declared themselves the legitimate leader of the O.T.O. King<sup>126</sup> repudiates the claims of the four leaders and concludes that "no group can establish any legal claim to be the O.T.O. Nevertheless, any group which works in the genuine spirit and can make the required contacts with the forces on higher planes that are beyond the O.T.O., can regard itself, as magically speaking, a section of the genuine O.T.O" (Secret Rituals 32).

When King published Ritual Magic in England (1970) and The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O (1973), very little was known about Grant's contribution<sup>127</sup> to the

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<sup>124</sup>In an article in Star Fire, the official magazine of the O.T.O., Michael Staley published some of the correspondence between Grant and Germer, which revealed that the latter never accepted the responsibility of being the Outer Head of the O.T.O., considering himself inadequate for that position. Furthermore, Staley demonstrated that it was actually Grant whom Germer thought to be the most suitable initiate to become the Outer Head of the O.T.O. In a letter to Grant, dated May 25, 1951, Germer claims that "what I appear to be in the O.T.O has been thrust upon me, against my will. I will do what I can; but I shall refuse to make claims that go against my grain. I am strictly speaking the Grand Treasurer General of the O.T.O. No more no less! The whole situation shouts for somebody who has the will and the guts and the capacity to grow into supreme leadership. If he comes along he will have my full support. But I personally am not going to sail under false pretences" (38). In another letter to Grant, dated January 18, 1952, Germer expresses his opinion that it is perhaps Grant who is able to assume the leadership of the O.T.O. Germer asserts that "if we want to get the O.T.O properly going again, we need a competent leader, not only for England but for the world. It must be somebody who knows the thing inside out; who has a goal not only for a period of his own life-span, but beyond that. I have often thought that you might well be chosen for the job" (39).

<sup>125</sup>According to King, the four groups were a) The O.T.O in Switzerland headed by Frater Paragranus; b) The O.T.O in California, U.S.A [headed by Frater Hymenaeus Alpha, i.e., Grady McMurty (1918-85)]. c) Saturn Gnosis O.T.O in Germany, led until his death by Gregor A. Gregorius [Eugen Grosche]. d) O.T.O in England led by Kenneth Grant (Secret Rituals of the O.T.O 31).

<sup>126</sup>King's source of information is Frater Transmutemini, an initiate, as King claims, to the O.T.O tradition.

<sup>127</sup>According to "An Official Statement Concerning the Ordo Templi Orientis" (published in Mezla 1977) "the vitality of a magical current may be assessed by its products. It should be evident to all but the voluntary blind, therefore, that the various



magical current. In fact, Grant believed that he succeeded in contacting the "forces beyond the O.T.O". In 1955, Grant initiated<sup>128</sup> the New Isis Lodge (or Nu-Isis Lodge), a branch of the O.T.O, whose mission was to "channel transmission<sup>129</sup> from transplutonic sources, and during the seven<sup>130</sup> years of its activities it transformed the O.T.O into the highly specialized vehicle of magical energy which Aleister Crowley had envisaged for it as long ago as 1945" (Grant, Hecate's Fountain iii). It seems that Grant's resolution to initiate the New Isis Lodge rested on his aspiration to disentangle the O.T.O entirely from the solar esoteric tradition's sphere of influence. This was probably another point of disagreement between Grant and Germer. In his trilogies, Grant expresses repeatedly his disagreement with the O.T.O's dependency on the Masonic superstructure as well as the incompatibility of the Masonic ritual formulae with the philosophy and religious disposition of the New Aeon propagated by the

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shoots of the original O.T.O--bar one [that of Grant's] have, by this criterion proved themselves virtually impotent" (qtd. in Starfire 41). Moreover, concerning Grant's contribution to the chthonic magical current, Staley comments in Starfire that "with Grant's Typhonian trilogy, for nowhere else in published form, have the genuine and ultimate formulae of practical occultism has been made so fully available" (42). Grant also points out in Nightside of Eden that in his works "made available--perhaps for the first time in so plain a manner--knowledge which has hitherto been occult, i.e., hidden. In accordance with this fact I make no apology for having made these Mysteries clear to those who possess the necessary insight" (xi)

<sup>128</sup>Grant's initiative to found a new branch of the O.T.O led to his expulsion, on July 20, 1955, from the O.T.O by Germer. In 1955, Grant sent the manifesto of the New Isis Lodge to Germer, expressing his decision to reconstitute the order and achieve contact with the higher forces, but refused to send the rituals; according to King, this was the main reason that Germer expelled Grant from the O.T.O.

<sup>129</sup>Grant's two trilogies (Magical Revival 1972, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 1973, Cults of the Shadow 1975--Nightside of Eden 1977, Outside the Circles of Time 1980, Hecate's Fountain 1992) are based on these transmissions, which took place from the commencement of the Order in 1955 till 1962, when New Isis Lodge was re integrated to the main body of the O.T.O.

<sup>130</sup>Number seven is indicative of the Order's chthonic affiliations. Grant asserts that the New Isis Lodge "functioned for precisely seven years, seven being the number of Set and of the primal Goddess of the seven stars" (Cults of the Shadow 222). Furthermore, Grant testifies that the members of the Lodge met every seventh Friday" (Hecate's Fountain 9); Friday is, of course, a day consecrated to the Great Goddess.

chthonic esoteric tradition. In Nightside of Eden, Grant states that his teacher, Crowley, in spite of his

inspired writings . . . personally seemed unable to conceive a system of initiation outside the framework postulated by Freemasonry. This is why he perpetuated the old and rigid system described in the Equinox, Vol. III. No.1., which was upheld after his death by his unquestioning disciple Karl J. Germer. It was therefore left to the present writer [Kenneth Grant] to carry the new scheme forward, and this he has been doing for the past twenty-five years. (xiv)

Moreover, Grant asserts that "the Old Aeon systems of masonry were based upon the Square, and founded upon a concept of male supremacy symbolized by Osiris, Solomon, and other patriarchal figures" (xiii). Thus, it becomes apparent, that Grant established the New Isis Lodge in order to provide the link that would realign Crowley's Aeon of Horus with the ancient chthonic cult of the Great Goddess. Grant explicitly stresses in his trilogies the chthonic nature of the New Isis Lodge and he asserts, echoing Yeats, that since "psychic evolution, like other forms of evolution, unfolds in a spiral fashion", then the "masonic structure [which conforms, according to Grant, to the old patriarchal tradition] no longer accords with New Aeon consciousness and attitudes . . . and no longer represents the Universal Design of mystical and magical attainment" (Nightside of Eden xiii). Therefore, Grant continues, it is the new O.T.O that represents the new state of consciousness, since it is "founded upon the Circle, the Goddess, the Mother whose child is her symbol. It is thus a seeming revival of an earlier (in fact the earliest) ethos, in that it involves the worship of the Primal Goddess who, knowing no god, was later cast out as 'godless', and therefore--by a mode of the same curious logic--'devilish'" (Nightside of Eden xiii). Thus the feminine principle is glorified in the New Aeon, and subsequently the role of woman assumes an honoured and important position. According to Grant, the woman is "beginning to glimpse freedom and to make certain her release from the ancient and restrictive formulae of the . . . forces of the piscean current [patriarchal



current]" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 161); additionally, Grant insists that "woman will lead the initiatory system of the New Aeon [and] . . . will achieve a 'soul', a centre of her own, independent of the male intervention at present necessary for her full initiation" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 161).

The writers under consideration in this study--Yeats, Crowley, Pound, Graves--can be considered rhapsodists of the matriarchy and of the New Age. Subsequent chapters will demonstrate more clearly than has been done here the relationship between each writer and some of the occult movements and ideas described, and will also analyze each writer's esoteric manifestos (Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, Pound's The Cantos, and Graves's The White Goddess) as declarations of the commencement of the New Aeon, of the divinity of human beings, and of the necessity to reinstate the feminine principle.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Yeats, Crowley, and the Birth of a New Religion**

#### **Introduction**

Yeats asks in his autobiography, "Was modern civilisation a conspiracy of the sub-conscious?" (327). So far, this question has not been given serious consideration by Yeats's critics, since Yeats himself did not provide a straightforward answer to it. However, a careful study of Yeats's esoteric opus might yield an answer to this question. The breakthrough of depth psychology along with the important discoveries of Freud, Jung, and Kerenyie opened new horizons in the understanding of human psychology. The subconscious was no longer seen as something abstract and arcane, but a real force, an entity, that could even be evoked by symbols, as Yeats insists in his essay on magic. However, many of Yeats's critics consider magic a taboo subject and a terra incognita. The greatness of Yeats's poetry has been commemorated, more or less, by most of his critics; not all of them, though, acknowledge the sources of inspiration that produced this poetry. Despite Yeats's declaration of the significance of the occult in his literary work, Auden wonders how a man like Yeats could "take such nonsense seriously? . . . . How could Yeats, with his great aesthetic appreciation of aristocracy, ancestral houses, ceremonious tradition, take up something so essentially lower-middle class--or should I say Southern Californian--so ineluctably associated with suburban villas and clearly unattractive faces? . . . how embarrassing" (Hall, James and Martin Steinman 309). It is embarrassing, of course, that Auden defends his esoteric nescience by labelling absurd something that he cannot comprehend himself.

For other critics, the occult is only a source of symbols for Yeats's poetry. For instance, Blackmur, as well as E. Wilson, Brooks, and I. A. Richards, regard the esoteric tradition as consisting of fragmentary insights that on the one hand provided Yeats with the necessary symbols for his poetry, and on the other served as a



substitute for the Christian religion that Yeats denounced. Flannery, Vendler, F. A. C. Wilson, Harper and Ellmann further explore the esoteric thought of Yeats's poetry and fully acknowledge its importance, but only as a means of evoking great poetry. Flannery points out that "our full understanding of the work of one of our greatest poets depends upon our recognition of the place of magic in his development and in his great poetry" (Yeats and Magic: The Earlier Works 8). Ellmann adds that "the metaphysical urge in Yeats was inseparable from his greatness as a poet. Were it removed there would be few poems left" (Yeats The Man and the Masks xxi).

However, even critics who are sympathetic to Yeats's occult ideas fail to realize the depth of Yeats's involvement in esoteric thought. For example, Virginia Moore and Kathleen Raine's propensity to exaggerate Yeats's alleged Christianity is, to say the least, a distortion of Yeats's philosophical and religious leanings. As this chapter will show, Moore, in her desperate attempt to prove Yeats a Christian, becomes a heretic herself.

Yeats's philosophy was an attempt to destroy the boundaries between good and evil, to come into contact and resurrect the half-forgotten reality--suppressed by the "simple-minded religion of [his] childhood" (Autobiographies 142)--which was overflowing the underground stream of occult tradition. Yeats was convinced that the understanding of the occult tradition would help humanity raise its spiritual consciousness to a level that would render possible the birth of a new divinity in the human soul. Yeats, in a sense, became a prophet of this new divinity, which he proclaims in A Vision, undertaking the mission of heralding the new age that would engender its 'antithetical revelation' or 'turbulent child of the altar'<sup>1</sup> (A Vision 204),

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<sup>1</sup>According to Yeats, the altar symbolizes the eastward movement of the nations, in contrast to the symbol of the cavern (birthplace of Jesus) which stands for the westward movement of nations. Since the east for Yeats is "Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Egypt" (A Vision 157), we can deduce, furthermore, that the turbulent child, or Jung's 'child archetype,' represents humanity's shift toward the magico-philosophical thought of the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians, whose preference

and the symbolical return of the Mother-Goddess or feminine principle in the human soul.

Yeats's turbulent child of the altar, or antithetical dispensation, leads us to Aleister Crowley's "crowned and conquering child" or Aeon of Horus. Both writers, though different in personality, communicate mainly the same message. Crowley, like Yeats, dissatisfied with the spiritual scarcity and materialism of his age, searched for a religion. In his esoteric manifesto, The Book of the Law or Liber Al, Crowley proclaims the advent of a new aeon, the emergence of the child-god archetype or Horus, to replace the patriarchal primary religions and restore the chthonic esoteric tradition as well as the feminine principle to its proper place. In fact, Crowley's Horus and Yeats's turbulent child are essentially the same archetype. Both symbolize the outcome of the assimilation of the opposites, the child of the two opposing forces that struggle in the great wheel of the human psyche, the child of the mother alone that has been neglected by the Christian religion, the same child that Pound and Graves extol in their poetry, the neglected child of the waning moon, the bearer of light or Lucifer who represents the 'height' of the Mother and manifests her unity.

For most of the critics, Crowley's strange world is a terra incognita, a forbidden place populated by monsters born of Crowley's association with the left-handed tantric<sup>2</sup> element which he utilized in his magic. Raine refers to Crowley as

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rested with the feminine aspect of the human soul, later neglected in the patriarchal solar religions.

<sup>2</sup>Francis King describes Tantra as an "unorthodox religious tendency to be found in Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism. . . . A mystical system concerned with polarity in general and sexuality in particular" (Tantra, The Way of Action 7). In this system, the aspirant appropriates the sexual element in order to dissolve duality and reach a higher state of consciousness. Tantra is divided into 'right-handed', and 'left-handed'. The former fraction conducts its ceremonies on the astral plane, while the latter on the physical. King explains that: "The terms left and right as used in Tantra have no moral overtones whatsoever; it must not be thought that the term 'left-handed Tantra' in any way equates with what Western occultists call the 'left-hand path--i.e. Satanism and Black Magic. The terms 'left-handed' and 'right-handed' Tantra merely express the fact that in the early stage of ceremonies culminating in physical sexuality the female



"Yeats's caricature [and] shadow" (Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn, 33), and Moore assumes that for Yeats and the other adepts in the Golden Dawn, Crowley was a "persona non grata, a show off, charlatan, and perhaps a black magician" (161). Except for the above-mentioned epithets and some very brief correlations<sup>3</sup> that Raine draws in Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn, no other critic has made a serious attempt to compare these two poets.

The aim of this chapter is twofold: First, to provide evidence that for Yeats and Crowley modern civilisation was indeed a conspiracy of the subconscious, that Yeats and Crowley regarded themselves as conspirators and apostles whose mission was to spread the doctrines of this conspiracy of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and second, to examine and compare the philosophical and esoteric beliefs of both Yeats and Crowley in order to clarify some obscure aspects in the metaphysical thought of the former and restate the marred literary reputation of the latter.

### **The Archetype of the Child-God**

Before we proceed further in the unravelling of Yeats and Crowley's metaphysical thought, it is imperative to comment on the archetype of the child-god

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adept sits on the left hand of the male, while in symbolic ceremonies she sits on the right" (15).

<sup>3</sup>Raine acknowledges that both Yeats and Crowley shared the same occult tradition, and that both wrote "of the ending of one Great Year, and of the advent of an antithetical phase" (35). She recognizes Crowley as a prophet "complementary (or antithetical) to Yeats himself" (34), and quotes a passage from Yeats's "A Resurrection" and Crowley's The Book of the Law as evidence. Puzzling over the resemblance of the two passages, she insinuates that Crowley imitated the style of Yeats. However, she does not draw attention to the fact that "A Resurrection" was written in 1931, while The Book of the Law in 1904. Furthermore, Raine poses the interesting question of whether Crowley was "an aspect of Yeats's 'rough beast'" (34). She also assumes that "Yeats cannot have been unaware of Crowley's new cult of the Antichrist 'Thelema', with its deliberate desecrations and defilements", and concludes that "whereas Crowley placed himself in the services of Antichrist, 'the savage God' of the new cycle, Yeats's fidelity was to 'the old King', to 'that unfashionable gyre', the values about to be obscured, to the workman, noble and saint' of Christian civilization" (35).

as it appears in Jung, Freud, and Kerenyi's works, to comprehend better Yeats's turbulent child and Crowley's crowned and conquering child.

Crowley, Yeats, and Jung agree that Horus, the turbulent child or child-god archetype, forms on the one hand an inseparable part of the human psyche, which having been suppressed reappears forcefully and victoriously in the human consciousness with the analogous consequences, and on the other hand, represents the outcome of the assimilation of the opposites, or result of the accomplishment of the Great Work or new divinity. Crowley emphasizes that this child constitutes the divine element in the human soul and identifies it with the Holy Guardian Angel, whose 'attainment and knowledge' is a task that every human being must undertake. In his commentary on The Book of the Law, Crowley also acknowledges the importance of Jung and Freud's contribution to the unravelling of the child-god archetype:

The Child is the Dwarf-Self, the Phallic<sup>4</sup> consciousness, which is the true life of Man, beyond his 'veils' of incarnation. We have to thank Freud--and especially Jung--for stating this part of the Magical Doctrine so plainly, as also for their development of the connection of the Will of this 'child' with the True or Unconscious Will, and so for clarifying our doctrine of the Silent Self, or Holy Guardian Angel. (74)

The archetype of the child-god represents a perichoresis<sup>5</sup> or irruption of the unconscious, reminding humanity that it risks the danger of severing its ties with the collective unconscious or with the instinctual forces that constitute the dark or hidden

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<sup>4</sup>Jung asserts that the child is "closely related to the phallus, symbol of the begetter, so it comes up again in the sepulchral phallus, symbol of a renewed begetting" (97). In addition, Kerenyi states that " . . . begetting and birth are identical, as also the begetter and the begotten. The phallus is the child, and the child--Aphrodite--an eternal stimulus to further procreation" (The Primordial Child in Primordial Times 56).

<sup>5</sup>A Hellenic word denoting a form of union, in which the allocated parts compose a unity, and at the same time maintain their distinct characteristics. The term was coined by Ioannis Damaskinos at the beginning of the eighth century A.D, in an attempt to describe the Holy Trinity, and the coexistence of the divine and human nature in the figure of Christ (Balanos, George. Personal Interview. 7 January 1994).



side of the human soul. The child-god as an archetype<sup>6</sup> itself, cautions humanity that its insistent preoccupation with the conscious state threatens seriously the psychical equilibrium of the individual and its survival on earth. Jung, in The Psychology of the Child Archetype, expresses his fear that a continued imbalance in the human soul might result in a catastrophe, and emphasizes that "the child motif represents . . . something that exists *now*; . . . it is not just a vestige but a system functioning in the present whose purpose is to compensate or correct, in a meaningful manner, the inevitable one-sidednesses and extravagances of the conscious mind" (81). Furthermore, Jung points out that "as man has, in high degree, the capacity for cutting himself off from his own roots, he may also be swept uncritically to catastrophe by his dangerous one-sidedness" (The Psychology of the Child Archetype 82). Jung refers to the agelong struggle of the opposites in the human psyche, and to humanity's tendency to exonerate one over the other. In the culmination of the present cycle, humanity's dangerous one-sidedness has been created, as Jung states, by its preoccupation with the powers of the left hemisphere of the brain, or Yeats's primary forces, that is logic or reason. Jung points out that the insistence of human beings to ignore the signs of the irruption of the child archetype in the sphere of human consciousness is unwise and dangerous, since the unconscious represents powers infinitely greater than the powers of the conscious, and he reminds us also the need for a synthesis: "If then, the childhood state of the collective psyche is repressed to the point of total exclusion, the unconscious content overwhelms the conscious aim and inhibits, falsifies, even destroys its realization. Viable progress only comes from the co-operation of both" (The Psychology of the Child Archetype 83).

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<sup>6</sup>According to Jung, the archetype "represents or personifies certain instinctive data of the dark, primitive psyche, the real but invisible roots of consciousness" (79), and again, Jung significantly comments that "archetypes were, and still are, living psychic forces that demand to be taken seriously, and they have a strange way of making sure of their effect . . . " (75-6).

Hence, the child-god archetype is simultaneously a curse and a blessing. It constitutes an imminent danger to humanity, since it symbolizes instinctual forces that have been repressed for the last twenty centuries and are now ready to be unleashed, and also the chaotic forces of nature that humanity unwisely exploits. But the child is also the potential saviour of humanity, since it is the product of the synthesis between the opposites; Jung notes that "it is therefore a symbol which unites the opposites, a mediator, bringer of healing, that is, one who makes whole" (The Psychology of the Child Archetype 83). In addition, Jung connects the child archetype with the human will and desire for self-actualization<sup>7</sup> and independence from the wheel of the opposites. As Jung indicates, the child archetype "represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself" (The Psychology of the Child Archetype 89). It was this urge for self-actualization and the quest for spiritual values that pushed Yeats and Crowley into their esoteric journey.

### **Yeats and Crowley's Quest for Wisdom**

On the 18th of November 1898, eight years after Yeats's first initiation<sup>8</sup> into the Isis Ourania Hermetic Temple of the Golden Dawn, a twenty-three year-old blindfolded poet, Aleister Crowley,<sup>9</sup> paced the London Masonic headquarters, and

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<sup>7</sup>Maslow's term expresses perfectly Yeats and Crowley's desire. In Further Reaches of Human Nature, Maslow, as if thinking about Yeats and Crowley, exclaims that "self-actualizing people are involved in a cause outside their own skin . . . devote their lives to the search for what I have called the 'being' values, the ultimate values which are intrinsic, which cannot be reduced to anything more ultimate" (44).

<sup>8</sup>Yeats was a member of the Theosophical Society from 1887 to 1890, and of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn from April 7, 1890 to 1922.

<sup>9</sup>Crowley received in 1904 The Book of the Law, a manifesto that like Yeats's A Vision proclaims the commencement of the new cycle with its emphasis on the divine nature of human beings. In 1907, he dissociated himself from the Golden Dawn and found the Order of the Silver Star, and in 1922 became the Outer Head of the Ordo Templi Orientis (The Order of the Temple of the East). The O.T.O is a secret society whose history goes back to the Order of the Temple; its last Outer Head was Jacques du Molay (1293-1313). For further information see Grant's Magical Revival, Webster's Secret Societies and Subversive Movements, and Crowley's



took the oath of the neophyte. For both Yeats and Crowley their initiation into the Golden Dawn functioned as a turning point in the development of their inner selves. Before his initiation, Crowley was yearning "passionately for illumination, I could imagine nothing more exquisite than to enter into communion with these holy men [initiates of that mysterious order or brotherhood that Eckartshausen hints at *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*] and to acquire the power of communication with the angelic and divine intelligence of the universe" (Confessions 146). After the initiation ceremony, Crowley remarked, "I took the Order with absolute seriousness. I was not even put off by the fact of its ceremonies taking place at Mark Mason's Hall" (176). Yeats's long lasting devotion to the Order reveals his commitment to the magical path. Two years after his initiation, on July 23, 1892, Yeats wrote to John O'Leary that "If I had not made magic my constant study I could not have written a single word of my Blake book, nor would the Countess Cathleen have ever come to exist. The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write" (Letters 211).

Crowley's obsession with the Occult had started long before he joined the Golden Dawn. Like Yeats, who was inspired by his reading of Sinnet's Esoteric Buddhism, Crowley was inspired by Waite's Book of Black Magic and of Pacts, and by Eckartshausen's The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary; as a result, he published at his own expense a number of Swinburnian poems such as the "Songs of the Spirit", "The Quest", and "The Alchemist". Notably, in "The Farewell of Paracelsus to Aprile", "The Initiation", "Isaiah" and "Power", Crowley comments on the difficulties that the initiate experiences along the magical quest. The basic theme of these poems is, according to Crowley, "the yearning after sanctification" (147). Colin Wilson, in his biography of Crowley, comments that the latter's poetry "lacks Swinburne's natural

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Autohagiography. As for the Golden Dawn, it is not within the scope of this study to examine its history. Much work has been done focusing on Yeats and the Golden Dawn, that it would be redundant to include here. Classic studies on the Golden Dawn include: George Mills Harper's Yeats's Golden Dawn, Ellic Howe's The Magicians of the Golden Dawn, and Regardie's Golden Dawn.

talent for verbal music, his poetry never seems to flow freely for more than a line or two. Then he seems to get himself tangled up in language" (The Nature of the Beast 34). Indeed, awkwardness in diction marks Crowley's early poetry, which was published when he was still a student at Cambridge. In his autobiography, Crowley admits to the influence of Swinburne, but simultaneously attacks hostile or indifferent critics who see him as a mere imitator:

The shallow critic hastily assumed that the influence of Swinburne was paramount in my style, but on rereading the volume [Jephtah and Mysteries, Lyrical and Dramatic] I do not think that the accusation is particularly justifiable. There are plenty of other authors who might more reasonably be served with an affiliation summons. Indeed, criticism in England amounts to this: that if a new writer manifests any sense of rhythm, he is classed as an imitator of Swinburne; if any capacity for thought, of Browning. (165)

Despite its technical problems (and the lack of discipline on the part of the writer to solve them), Crowley's early poetry reveals a genuine sensitivity and a deep religious yearning that was responsible for his later adventures. In an article in The Nation concerning Crowley, the anonymous writer observes keenly that "no one who reads such poems as these ["The Soul of Osiris" 1901] can doubt that this poet is authentic and will reveal to the world much new beauty. Unless his eye be dazzled and his brain distraught by the ruptures of Mysticism" (Vol.73, No.1886, Aug 22, 1901,p.153).

In 1899, Crowley visited Yeats to discuss with him his latest collection of poetry, Mysteries, Lyrical and Dramatic. It is obvious from his Confessions that Crowley admired Yeats and wanted some advice and attention from the more experienced and talented poet. As Crowley points out in his autobiography, "I should have been glad to have a kindly word from an elder man" (165). But instead of a "kindly word", Crowley received from Yeats indifference and animosity. Crowley implied that Yeats was not very enthusiastic about his poetry. Yeats, according to Crowley, "forced himself to utter a few polite conventionalities, but I could see what the truth of the matter was" (Confessions 166). Unfortunately, Crowley's egoism overshadowed the



truth, and made him think that Yeats was jealous of his poetry. In his usual indulgent tone, Crowley remarks:

It would have been a very dull person indeed who failed to recognise the black, bilious rage that shook him [Yeats] to the soul. I instance this as a proof that Yeats was a genuine poet at heart, for a mere charlatan would have known that he had no cause to fear an authentic poet. What hurt him was the knowledge of his own incomparable inferiority" (166).

Of course, Yeats's aloofness and hostility towards the young poet is strange,<sup>10</sup> considering that both poets were 'brothers' in the same hermetic order. What probably hurt Yeats most was knowledge of Crowley's sexual misconduct. Rumours were apparently circulating about Crowley's homosexual experience with Herbert Charles Jerome Pollitt. A graduate of Cambridge and ten years Crowley's senior, Pollitt was an amateur dancer and a female impersonator. At the time of his affair with Pollitt, Crowley was in his last year at Cambridge. As Crowley points out in his autobiography, the relationship between the two men "was that ideal intimacy which the Greeks considered the greatest glory of manhood and the most precious prize of life" (142). Crowley insists that his relationship with Pollitt was purely platonic-- "it was the purest and noblest . . . which I had ever had with anybody" (143)--and attacks the "moral state of England" that misinterprets "the greatest glory of manhood" with "physical passion" (142).

It seems, though, that Crowley hides the obvious in his autobiography. As Timothy D'Arch Smith reveals,

Pollitt's and Crowley's relationship was undoubtedly a homosexual one and is cryptically alluded to in Crowley's homosexual pastiche 'Bagh-I-Muattar, the Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz. . . . The

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<sup>10</sup>T.S. Eliot testifies about Yeats that, "in his conversations with a younger writer I always felt that he offered terms of equality, as to a fellow worker, a practitioner of the same mystery" (qtd. in The Permanence of Yeats 333).

first letters of the first lines of each stanza of this poem spell out Pollitt's full name (Jerome included), and to underline the liaison the succeeding poem yields, upside down, the name of Crowley himself.<sup>11</sup> (The Books of the Beast 30)

Thus, Crowley's homosexual liaison may have affected negatively that first meeting between Crowley and Yeats. Crowley, on his part, convinced of Yeats's "bilious rage" and blinded by his egocentricity and triviality, criticizes Yeats's poetry as lacking "virility" (Confessions 165), and characterizes Yeats as "a lank dishevelled demonologist who might have taken more pains with his personal appearance without incurring the reproach of dandyism" (Confessions 177). In Moonchild, Crowley ranks Yeats among the members of the Black Lodge, but still, the hidden admiration that Crowley had for Yeats is apparent:

The third commissioner was the brains of the business. He was a man highly skilled in black magic in his own way. He was a lean, cadaverous Protestant Irishman named Gates [Yeats], tall, with the scholar's stoop. He possessed real original talent, with now and then a flash of insight which came close to genius. But though his intellect was keen and fine, it was in some way confused; and there was a lack of virility in his make-up. . . . But there was no harm in him; he had no business in the Black Lodge at all; it was but one of his romantic phantasies to pose as a terribly wicked fellow. (152)

Crowley's magical life was as intense and diverse as his sexual life. He managed to climb up the Tree of Life in an amazingly short time. In a period of seven months, he succeeded in completing the first four degrees<sup>12</sup> of the outer order of the

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<sup>11</sup>In the above mentioned poem, Crowley tantalizes his readers to discover the name of his lover. The first stanza is indicative:

Habib hath heard; let all Iran  
 who spell aright from A to Z  
 Exalt thy fame and understand  
 with whom I made a marriage-bed

<sup>12</sup>Crowley comments in his Confessions: "I took the grade of Zelator in December [1898], of Theoricus in January, and of Practicus in February. One could not proceed



Golden Dawn and was ready for his initiation into the second order. But the representatives<sup>13</sup> of the R.R et A.C (Roseae Rubeae et Aureae Crusis-Red Rose and Golden Cross) in London refused to initiate Crowley, probably because of the rumours about the latter's sexual misconduct. As Yeats indicates in a letter to Lady Gregory, dated April 21, 1900, Crowley's admission into the second order was denied because "we [the administrative members of the second order, mainly Farr and Yeats] did not think a mystical society was intended to be a reformatory" (339). Disregarding the London chiefs, Crowley travelled to Paris where he was initiated into the second order by Mathers himself. In his Magickal diary Crowley notes that on January 16, 1900, "I [was] admitted to the glory of Tiphereth<sup>14</sup> " (qtd. in Howe 206). When back in Scotland, Crowley sent a letter to the London authorities of the second order asking for the analogous documents. They refused, as Crowley indicates in his diary entry of Saturday, March 25: "heard this evening from Deo Date [Mrs E.A. Hunter, secretary of the second order]. Second Order apparently mad. Resolved to write to D.D.C.F [Mathers] offering myself" (208). From Mathers, Crowley, had also heard about the breaking away of the London Chiefs. Crowley immediately took Mathers' side, acting as his representative in London, intending to seize, in the name of Mathers, the offices of the Golden Dawn at 36 Blythe Street. This incident actually led to the second and last encounter between Yeats and Crowley. In a letter to Lady Gregory, dated April 25, 1900, Yeats speaks of Crowley harshly: "Last week he [Mathers] sent a mad person, whom we had refused to initiate, to take possession of the rooms and papers of the society" (Letters 340). In a subsequent letter to Lady

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to Philosophus for three months, so I did not take that grade till May" (178). Meanwhile, Crowley had the unreserved support of three other more advanced initiates: Allan Bennet, Rosher, and G.C. Jones.

<sup>13</sup>In 1892, Mathers moved to Paris to found the Ahathour Temple Number 7, till 1897 Westcott was his representative in London, and when the latter resigned, was replaced by Mrs Florence Farr Emery.

<sup>14</sup>The degree of Adeptus Minor in the Second Order.

Gregory, dated April 28, 1900, Yeats characterizes Crowley as a "person of unspeakable life" (Letters 342).

Considering that homosexuality was a serious crime in England at that time, it is easy to understand Yeats's fear and reservations about Crowley's "unspeakable life", particularly when Crowley's conduct had been noticed by the police. In his diary, Crowley points out that "shortly after my Great Trouble [his homosexual liaison with Pollitt?], Laura warns me that I am in danger from the police" (206). In another entry he notes:

I went [January 13, 1900] to Volo Noserre [G.C.Jones] over Sunday and Monday, saw I.A [Bennet]. This day Monday 15th at 7 p.m I got (at H.C) two letters from Evelyn. These say: You (and all your friends at 67 [Chancery Lane] are watched by the police. This is connected with 'the brother of a college chum' but no doubt can be entertained of the meaning of the hints. I caught the night boat to Paris, as I had originally intended. (206)

Crowley's "unspeakable life" perhaps explains but does not fully justify the London Chiefs' refusal to initiate Crowley into the second order. By refusing Crowley's legitimate ascent into the order, the London Chiefs were breaking, in a way, their magical oaths<sup>15</sup> and spirit of brotherhood. Even before Crowley's admission into the order, Mathers had warned the members about the sanctity of an individual's private life. In a letter to Annie Horniman, dated January 8, 1896, Mathers comments: "You have every right to your own opinion regarding yourself, but what your companions do is a matter for their consideration and consciences" (qtd. in Howe 22). In his manifesto addressed to the Theorici Adepti Minores of the second order, Mathers further stresses:

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<sup>15</sup>Part of the obligation of the Adeptus Minor degree states that the adept should "always display brotherly love and forbearance towards the members of the whole Order, neither slandering nor evil-speaking, nor repeating nor tale-bearing, whereby strife and ill-feeling may be engendered" (Regardie, Golden Dawn 230).



What I discountenance and will check and punish whenever I find it in the Order is any attempt to criticize and interfere with the private life of members of the Order; neither will I give the wisdom of the Gods to those who endeavour to use it as a means of justifying intolerance, intermeddling and malicious self-conceit. The private life of a person is a matter between himself or herself, and his, or her God; and no person who has taken the obligation of 5=6, and studied the same can be ignorant of its clauses and penalties. (October, 29 1896)

The works and lives of Crowley and Yeats reveal common elements in their idiosyncrasies and ideology. First, both men rebelled against the materialism and hypocrisy of Victorian bourgeois morality, and subsequently turned against institutionalized Christianity, though they were both very religious in nature. In order to fill the spiritual gap that resulted from the rejection of Christianity (which both Crowley and Yeats had identified with bourgeois morality), both poets turned to their poetic genius, mysticism, and magick. In his autobiography, Yeats reveals his positive attitude towards religion and at the same time acknowledges the artistic inclination that would eventually guide him into the world of the Occult. As a boy, Yeats "did not think [he] could live without religion" (Autobiographies 15), while as a young man he expressed the desire to find a creed that could satisfy his religious hunger:

Unlike others of my generation . . . I am very religious, and deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, I had made a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians. I wished for a world, where I could discover this tradition perpetually, and not in pictures and in poems only, but in tiles round the chimney-piece and in the hangings that kept out the draft. (Autobiographies 77)

Yeats goes on to connect this poetic tradition with the supernatural; the keepers and followers of that 'tradition' "seemed always to speak of one thing only: they, their loves, every incident of their lives, were steeped in the supernatural" (77).

Like Yeats, the young Crowley wished for a saintly life; however, the blind fanaticism of his puritan parents and uncle succeeded in transforming him from a fervent believer in Christianity into a heretic. As a school boy, Crowley, hero-worshipping his domineering Evangelical father, "aimed at being the most devoted follower of Jesus" (Confessions 49). Crowley points out that "I had been perfectly genuine in my ambition to lead a life of holiness; the idea of intimate communion with 'Jesus' was constantly present in my mind" (Confessions 66). The study of the scriptures, though, with the "apparent discrepancy in the gospel narrative" (Confessions 66), as well as the strict Puritanism of his uncle, resulted in Crowley disbelieving the omnipotence of the Christian God. However, Crowley makes it clear in his autobiography that, in the beginning at least, he was not necessarily revolted by the spirit of Christianity per se; it was the crude materialism and bigotry of the people who created dogmas out of spiritual truths that Crowley turned against:

It seems as if I possessed a theology of my own which was, to all intents and purposes, Christianity. . . . I was trying to take the view that the Christianity of hypocrisy and cruelty was not true Christianity. I didn't hate God or Christ, but merely the God and Christ of the people whom I hated. (73)

But when Crowley realized that "the scriptures support the theology and practice of professing Christians" (Confessions 73), he eventually set himself in opposition to the Bible itself: "It does not matter that the literature is sometimes magnificent and that in isolated passages the philosophy and ethics are admirable. The sum of the matter is that Judaism is a savage, and Christianity a fiendish superstition" (Confessions 73). Having rejected the "blasphemous and superstitious premises of Christian theology" (Confessions 67), Crowley inevitably turned to Mysticism and Magick: "I resolved



passionately to reach the spiritual causes of phenomena, and to dominate the material world which I detested by their means" (Confessions 67). Moreover, Crowley exclaims that "the true solution [to the existential problem] was . . . that of the mystic" (509). The search for the "spiritual causes of phenomena" led Crowley to Magick, which was for him, among other things, "the practical side of spiritual progress<sup>16</sup>" (Confessions 260).

In both Yeats and Crowley, the need for spiritual truth led them away from the dogmas of Christianity and consequently alienated them from society. Yeats, for example, felt estranged from middle class Irish society. His verbal thrashing of the angry and unreceptive audience at the premiere of Synge's play, The Playboy of the Western World, illustrates this alienation. The Playboy of the Western World is an attack on the conventionality of the Irish Catholic middle class and, at the same time, a celebration of artistic freedom and of the storyteller. In a letter to John Quinn, dated October 4, 1907, Yeats, referring to the Irish Catholic middle class, writes, "They shrink from Synge's harsh, independent, heroical, clean, mind swept view of things. They want their clerical conservatory where the air is warm and damp. . . . Nothing is ever persecuted but the intellect, though it is never persecuted under its own name" (Letters 495). Furthermore, Yeats notes in his Memoirs:

The Irish public, which has been excited into an active stock of democratic envy and jealousy, will not accept the pre-eminence of one or two writers . . . of Lady Gregory let us say. In its present phase, it dislikes or rather the expressive part of it dislikes all individual eminence. It lacks generosity. As soon as it has helped to raise any man or woman to a position of importance, it becomes jealous. . . . This feeling is increased when it recognises in that individual the free mind, the mind that toys with life and expresses great things lightly. It distrusts all that is not plainly logical work. . . . It dreads all liberated things, and is all the time half fascinated by what it dreads. . . . It holds to all rules because it cannot live without them. (168-69)

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<sup>16</sup>As Crowley attests later in his autobiography, "spiritual progress did not depend on religious or moral codes" (582).

Commenting on English middle class society, Crowley expresses, in harsher words, a bitterness similar to Yeats: "To a poet, moreover, the artistic side of London is the abomination of desolation" (116), adding:

There is no open air life, physical or mental, and there is the ever abiding sense of sin and shame to obsess these slaves. . . . England is the most fertile mother of poets, but she kills the weak and drives the strong to happier lands. James Thomson, John Davidson, Richard Middleton, Ernest Dowson, and I don't know how many more even in our own generation found England unendurable for this one reason. The English poet must either make a successful exile or die of a broken heart. (118-19)

But no matter how disillusioned they felt about the "corrupt pettiness of humanity" (Confessions 261), both Crowley and Yeats did not detach themselves from the mundane. They certainly had an elitist, aristocratic attitude towards the middle class, but this did not interfere with their intention to help their fellow human beings. The uniqueness of these two writers lies in the fact that they tried to impose their own vision on the world. Convinced of the inadequacy and obsolescence of the religious beliefs and morality of their times, they tried to create a new set of beliefs and ethics, and propagate them through their poetry and literary work.

Crowley, in his Confessions, expresses his sympathy for humanity, and his desire to help humanity comprehend spiritual values, and thus escape the nets of its stagnant conventionality to achieve a higher state of consciousness and understanding. Crowley significantly remarks: "I loved mankind, I wanted everybody to be an enthusiastic aspirant to the absolute. . . . My disillusionment drove me more and more to determine that the only thing worth doing was to save humanity from the horror of its own ignorant heartlessness" (261). In words reminiscent of Yeats, Crowley declares in his autobiography that "My own task was to bring oriental wisdom to Europe and to restore Paganism in a purer form" (The Confessions of Aleister Crowley 839).



In a letter to John O'Leary, dated July 23, 1892, Yeats confesses: "I have always considered myself a voice<sup>17</sup> of what I believe to be a greater renaissance, the revolt of the soul against the intellect--now beginning in the world" (211). Because of his occult knowledge and beliefs, Yeats was convinced that the end of the primary cycle was imminent; as an apostle of the oncoming age, he undertook the mission of spreading the seeds of the new antithetical cycle to his countrymen<sup>18</sup> and the world. Yeats's A Vision is the product of his apocryphal knowledge and a revelation that a new world order is about to commence in the world.

### **Yeats's A Vision and the New Divinity**

In A Vision,<sup>19</sup> in a chapter dedicated to Ezra Pound, Yeats declares that the work will "proclaim a new divinity" (27). He proceeds to elucidate the nature of this new divinity by referring to Christ. By mentioning Christ, Yeats apparently alludes to institutionalized Christianity, whose founder was "crucified [and] standing up, went into the abstract sky soul and body" (A Vision 27). Yeats juxtaposes the crucified

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<sup>17</sup>In the Scattering Branches, Maud Gonne notes: "In each generation [the Spirit of Life] chooses its instrument of expression from among the people, and when it speaks through them, their words and acts have extraordinary significance and extraordinary power" (27).

<sup>18</sup>This obsession was actually responsible for Ireland's literary renaissance and unity of culture. In December 1891, Yeats established the Irish Literary Society in London; five months later, he founded, with the guidance of O' Leary, the National Literary Society in Dublin. In 1898, Yeats conceived the idea of initiating a magical circle at the Castle on the Rock to propagate the doctrines of the new antithetical cycle. At the same time, he established the Irish National Theater, with the main intention, at least in the beginning, to propagate and popularize his occult ideas and the revolutionary ideas of the new antithetical cycle. Maud Gonne comments that, "without Yeats there would have been no Literary Revival in Ireland. Without the inspiration of that Revival, and the glorification of beauty and heroic virtues, I doubt if there would have been an Easter week" (Scattering Branches 27).

<sup>19</sup>Yeats attained the Adeptus Exemptus degree in 1917. Most probably, A Vision, which was a sequel to Per Amica Silentia Lunae (1917), was published as a thesis prerequisite for the attainment of that degree. Crowley, indicates that the adept, in order to receive the grade of Adeptus Exemptus, "must prepare and publish a thesis setting forth His (sic) knowledge of the Universe, and his proposals for its welfare and progress" (Magick 236).

saviour with Sophocles's Oedipus. Oedipus, like Christ, purged himself through suffering; however, unlike Christ, Oedipus, instead of ascending into the "abstract sky . . . sunk down soul and body into the earth" (A Vision 27). Clearly, in Yeats's religious metaphysics, there is a shift in emphasis from the "abstract sky" to the earth, from the "up" to the "down", from the patriarchal figure of Christ to the Great Mother of all the gods, as Sophocles calls the earth in his tragedies. This shift in emphasis, and the intrinsic meanings that it entails, becomes more apparent at the very end of A Vision, particularly in the last paragraph of "Dove or Swan", where Yeats, by referring to the Hellenic hero, Heracles, implies that the new divinity is the actual apotheosis of human beings, a state which can be achieved through a process of turning "down" or inwards toward the divine element that forms part of the human psyche. This "real-ization" occurs only after a reconciliation of the two opposing forces has taken place in the human soul. This unification or assimilation of the two opposing forces creates a condition that Yeats calls Unity of Being. The Unity of Being, in a sense, engenders this higher new state of consciousness that Yeats calls New Divinity.

Yeats, in A Vision, particularly in the chapter, 'A Packet for Ezra Pound', draws a parallel between the new divinity (which he intends to proclaim through his poetry and A Vision) and Oedipus, hinting that this new religion is about to replace the existing religious beliefs or "twenty centuries of stony sleep," as Yeats refers to Christianity in his poem, "The Second Coming". By asking three rhetorical questions, Yeats summarizes his credo to Ezra Pound:

What if Christ and Oedipus . . . are the two scales of a balance, the two butt-ends of a seesaw? What if every two-thousand and odd years something happens in the world to make one sacred, the other secular; one wise, the other foolish; one fair, the other foul; one divine, the other devilish?<sup>20</sup> What if there is an arithmetic or geometry that can

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<sup>20</sup>Crowley's The Book of the Law expresses the same idea; Hadit exclaims: "Behold! the rituals of the old time are black" (ii,5).



exactly measure the slope of a balance, the dip of a scale, and so date the coming of that something? (29)

The quest for "the coming of that something" preoccupied Yeats his whole life and reaches its climax in his philosophical and religious manifesto, A Vision. A Vision is a philosophical manifesto since it attempts to determine the relationship between the macrocosm (Universe, God) and the microcosm (human beings), and a religious manifesto as it proclaims a belief in the renaissance of the human spirit, that is, the union of human beings with the Divine, which, as a result, engenders this higher state of consciousness that Yeats called the new divinity. Moreover, A Vision, as a religious manifesto, attempts to establish the criteria which define the relationship between God and human beings, criteria which, if correctly apprehended and applied to human life, could lead to the dissolution of the duality principle (the basic premise of Christianity) and to the emergence of a "new species of man" (Autobiographies 339), one that, having been liberated from the bondage of duality, has felt its divine descent and has become apotheosized. In order to understand the nature of this apocalypse or new divinity, it is necessary to examine the basic tenets of A Vision.

Armed with considerable occult knowledge and poetic intuition, Yeats, in A Vision, explores the macrocosm and the microcosm.<sup>21</sup> He composes an arena, a "Great Wheel", where he places the two opposing forces--primary and antithetical--that create history, and which are also responsible for the behaviour of human beings.

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<sup>21</sup>The word macrocosm derives from the Hellenic words: Macros, meaning long, and Cosmos meaning world. According to Lewis Spence, the macrocosm represents "the infinite and the absolute" (An Encyclopaedia of Occultism 257). The word Microcosm represents human beings, and derives from the Hellenic words micro, meaning small, and Cosmos. According to J. E. Cirlot, the relationship between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm is "symbolic of the situation in the universe of man as the 'measure of all things'. The basis of this relationship--which has occupied the minds of thinkers and mystics of all kinds in all ages--is the symbolism of man himself, particularly as the 'universal man' together with his 'correspondences' with the Zodiac, the Planets and the Elements. As Origen observed: 'Understand that you are another world in miniature and that in you are the sun, the moon and also the stars'" (A Dictionary of Symbols 187).

This circular arena--where the two forces struggle relentlessly against each other--exists simultaneously within and without, that is, within the human psyche and also in the universe itself.

The macrocosm is usually understood to be the external universe, that is, everything that is manifested outside the human psyche. According to esoteric philosophy the psyche of human beings or the microcosm is the exact replica of the macrocosm. The Pythagorean metaphor of God as a universal soul or fire (with human beings as emanations of this soul or fire) illustrates the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm. The well known maxim of Hermes Trismegistus,<sup>22</sup> "As above so below," and the idea of anthropogenesis in the Bible, where "God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them" (Genesis I:27), also illustrate the idea of the microcosm and macrocosm. In other words, the relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm signifies the relationship of human beings with God. Yeats's A Vision undertakes the task of illustrating this relationship by examining the laws which govern the macrocosm, that is, the notion of duality and cyclical theory, and by applying the same laws to the human psyche. It was Yeats's belief that the understanding of these laws would enable human beings to achieve unity of being, and finally reach the state of "new divinity," which emerges out of the reconciliation

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<sup>22</sup>The legendary founder of Magic. According to R. G. Torrens, Hermes Trismegistus or Thrice Greatest Hermes was the name given to the Egyptian Thoth or Tehuti, the god of learning, wisdom and literature. He was the author of the books carried in the sacred processions of Egypt, which were records of ancient events and mysteries. These books described only by Clemens of Alexandria, a Christian writer of the second and third centuries, must be considered as of late concoction, and as chiefly of Greek manufacture. . . . Hermes Trismegistus was a fiction of the Neo-Platonic philosophy. He was the supposed mystical author of all wisdom and knowledge" (The Golden Dawn: The Inner Teachings 205). In the above mentioned formula, "As above so below", Hermes expresses in a condensed form the essence of Magick. If human beings are Divine emanations and contain the universe within themselves, then they can utilize their inherited Divine nature and exert power over all material things. Aleister Crowley, in his Magick Without Tears, defines Magick as the "Science and Art of causing change to occur in conformity with Will" (27).



between the human and divine nature. In other words, the understanding of these laws would enable human beings to transcend their mortal human nature, and embrace their immortal divine one.

Thus, the idea of the opposites and the cyclical theory are pivotal to Yeats's thought in A Vision. The principle of duality is based upon the interaction of opposites. Yeats had dedicated a great part of his life to contemplating the problem of opposites; in fact, as an occultist and a member of the Golden Dawn and the later Stella Matutina, he actually swore<sup>23</sup> to dedicate his life to the Great Work. According to Crowley, the Great Work is "the uniting of opposites, it may mean the uniting of the soul with God, of the microcosm with the macrocosm, of the female with the male, of the ego with the non ego, or what not" (Magick Without Tears 7). Kenneth Grant significantly adds that:

The resolution of contraries helps to develop the faculty of consciousness necessary for merging the ego in a state transcending individual awareness. Cosmic consciousness then replaces ego consciousness. This is the object of the Great Work in its present phase. Sociologically interpreted, this may imply the dissolution of all barriers which hinder the free interchange of nations, races, and sexes; an instantaneous union of entities which owing to artificial codes of conduct have been considered disparate and unfusable. (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 219)

Yeats's ultimate purpose in A Vision is to comprehend and reconcile opposites; human beings would thereby achieve, on a microcosmic level, unity of being, and thus engender the new state of consciousness that would enable them to realize the God within.

William Blake, in his "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," declares that "Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion. Reason and Energy. Love and

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<sup>23</sup>In the Adeptus Minor Ritual, Yeats swore among other things to "apply myself to the Great Work--which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me" (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 230).

Hate are necessary to Human existence" (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake 34).

Cirlot, in his A Dictionary of Symbols, remarks that:

The mystery of duality, which is at the root of all action, is manifest in any opposition of forces, whether spatial, physical or spiritual. The primordial pairing of heaven and earth appears in most traditions as an image of primal opposition, the binary essence of natural life. As Schneider has observed, the eternal duality of nature means that no phenomenon can ever represent a complete reality, but only one half of a reality. Each form has its analogous counterpart: man/woman; movement/rest; evolution/involution; right/left-and total reality embraces both. (24)

In A Vision, Yeats calls the two opposing forces antithetical and primary. The antithetical force is responsible for every human artistic quality and can be manifested in humans through inspiration and intuition. The primary force stands for the human rational and logical qualities and functions exclusively through the five senses. In other words, the antithetical force refers to the unconscious creative state of human existence, while the primary one to the conscious, rational state. In terms of the macrocosm, the antithetical force can be understood as the positive evolutionary force that creates, while the primary can be considered as counter energy to the antithetical, a force that always negates creativity. Yeats portrays these two forces as opposing cones or dynes of energy:

By the antithetical cone . . . we express more and more . . . our inner world of desire and imagination, whereas by the primary . . . we express more and more . . . that objectivity of mind which, in the words of Murray's Dictionary lays "stress upon that which is external to the mind" or treats "of outward things and events rather than of inward thought" or seeks "to exhibit the actual facts, not coloured by the opinions or feelings". The antithetical tincture is emotional and aesthetic, whereas the primary tincture is reasonable and moral. (A Vision 73)



In The Saviours of God (1922), Nikos Kazantzakis, the Greek visionary poet, novelist, and philosopher, discusses extensively the problem of the opposites, though he refers to the two opposing forces as mind (primary in Yeats's terminology) and heart (antithetical). Kazantzakis remarks:

I walk on the rim of the abyss and I tremble. Two voices contend within me. The mind: "why waste ourselves by pursuing the impossible? Within the holy enclosure of our five senses it is our duty to acknowledge the limitations of man." But another voice within me--call it the Sixth power, call it the heart--resists and shouts: "No! No! Never acknowledge the limitations of man. Smash all boundaries! Deny whatever your eyes see. Die every moment, but say: 'Death does not exist.'" (53)

The problem of the opposites has not only preoccupied the mind of philosophers and literary figures but also psychologists. The American psychologist Thomson Jay Hudson,<sup>24</sup> in The Law of Psychic Phenomena (1892), insists that "The mind of man is dual in its nature,--objective and subjective" (207), and makes the significant remark that:

the objective mind takes cognizance of the objective world. Its media of observation are the five physical senses. . . . Its highest function is that of reasoning. The subjective mind takes cognizance of its environment by means independent of the physical senses. It perceives by intuition. It is the seat of the emotions . . . [it] possesses clairvoyant power. (29)

Hudson's observations provide insight into what Yeats meant by the antithetical and primary state.

Seventy-two years after the publication of Hudson's book, Roger W. Sperry,<sup>25</sup> an American psychobiologist, in his 1964 "James Arthur Lecture" concerning the

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<sup>24</sup>Hudson derived his observations from the experiments he conducted with subjects under hypnosis.

<sup>25</sup>Sperry reached his conclusions by studying epileptic patients who had undergone a surgery of the corpus callosum in order to reduce, as Sperry says, "the severity of the

evolution of the human brain presented at the American Museum of Natural History, surprised the scientific world with the striking statement that human beings possess within themselves

two separate spheres of consciousness (Gazzaniga, Boggen, and Sperry, 1962, 1963). What is experienced in the right hemisphere [of the brain] seems to be entirely outside the realm of awareness of the left hemisphere. This mental duplicity has been demonstrated in regard to perception, cognition, learning and memory. One of the hemispheres, the left, dominant, or major hemisphere, has speech and is normally talkative and conversant. The other mind of the minor hemisphere, however, is mute or dumb, being able to express itself only through non-verbal reactions. (14)

Specifically, Sperry comments about the right hemisphere that it "really does perceive and comprehend, even though it cannot express what it sees and thinks" (16). In his lecture Sperry offers many examples to prove his revolutionary idea:

The left hand [of a subject] is allowed to feel and to manipulate, say, a toothbrush under the table or out of sight behind a screen. Then a series of five to ten cards are laid out with names on them such as "ring," "fork." When asked, the subject may tell you that what she felt in the left hand was a "ring." However, when instructed to point with the left hand, the speechless hemisphere deliberately ignores the erroneous opinions of its better half and goes ahead independently to point out the correct answer, in this case the card with the word "toothbrush." (17)

On a microcosmic level Yeats's Great Wheel corresponds to Sperry's two hemispheres of the human brain. On a macrocosmic level Yeats places the two opposing forces in a circular arena, within a Great Wheel, and in an attempt to interpret history, accepts the esoteric cyclical philosophy--as the latter is portrayed in the teachings of the Theosophical Society--and therefore accepts the inevitability of the rise and decline of each civilisation or individual. The symbol of the cycle itself

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attacks by the elimination of a very powerful avenue for the right-left mutual reinforcement of the seizures during the generalized phase" (14).



plays a crucial role in A Vision; in fact, the Great Wheel--with the two forces in opposition--is the director of the drama of life.

According to Yeats, "A Great Wheel of twenty-eight incarnations is considered to take . . . some two-thousand odd years, and twelve such wheels or gyres constitute a single great cone or year of some twenty-six thousand years" (A Vision 202). In fact, the Great Wheel cannot be comprehended as a cycle; it resembles a cycle while portrayed in its two dimensional form. But if imagined in its three dimensional qualities, then the wheel takes the form of a spiral or a dyne of energy. In actuality we have two interpenetrating dynes, each lasting one-thousand years.

Yeats divides the Wheel into twenty-eight phases that correspond to the waning and waxing of the moon. The phases from eight to twenty-two belong entirely to the antithetical force that in Yeats's Great Wheel is represented by the moon, while phases twenty-two to eight correspond to the primary force that is represented by the sun. Yeats points out in A Vision that "Phase 8 begins the antithetical phases . . . and Phase 22 begins the primary phases. . . . At Phases 15 and 1 respectively, the antithetical and primary tinctures come to a climax."<sup>26</sup> Human and universal history follows the rhythm of this cosmic pendulum that swings eternally between the antithetical and primary era and, as a consequence, is influenced by the characteristics which determine each era respectively. In this way, the antithetical civilisation of the Hellenes was destined to be followed by the primary Christian era. As the latter primary cycle closes, a new antithetical cycle emerges.

If the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm, then the Great Wheel exists within the human psyche as well. Yeats comments that "This wheel is every completed movement of thought or life, twenty-eight incarnations, a single incarnation, a single judgement or act of thought" (A Vision 81). In this way, the

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<sup>26</sup>According to Yeats, "Phase 15 is called Sun in Moon because the solar or primary tincture is consumed by the lunar. . . . Phase 1 is called Moon in Sun because the lunar or antithetical tincture is consumed in the primary or solar. (A Vision 82)

human psyche becomes the battleground where humans fight for self knowledge. In consequence, it becomes necessary for human beings to understand and chart the phase to which they belong and also the corresponding phase of the civilisation in which they live. According to Yeats's philosophy, individuals should also experience the whole cycle, that is, the two opposing forces which dwell in their psyche. Indeed, as Yeats remarks, "Man seeks his opposite or the opposite of his condition" (A Vision 81).

In addition to the twenty-eight phases, Yeats further explores human psychology by introducing the four faculties: the will, the mask, the creative mind, and the body of fate. According to Yeats:

The first two are lunar or antithetical or natural, the second two solar or primary or reasonable . . . these pairs of opposites whirl in contrary directions, Will and Mask from right to left, Creative Mind and Body of Fate like the hands of a clock, from left to right. (73)

These four faculties or factors exist within the human psyche, and stimulate progress because of their continuous conflict.

The Will can be understood as the driving or life force. It is a neutral energy that helps the individual to accomplish his/her desires and wishes; and belongs to the antithetical realm because it can be likened to intuition--the mysterious force that dwells in the depth of the unconscious. It is also the raw energy that permeates the universe and can be tapped by the unconscious part of the human psyche. According to Yeats, the Will, "when not affected by other faculties . . . has neither emotion, morality nor intellectual interest, but knows how things are done, how windows open and shut, how roads are crossed, everything that we call utility" (83).

The Mask is the role or the image that the individual pursues in life, that can be influenced either by the Will or by the Creative Mind. In the first case, when the Mask is under the influence of the Will, the individual acquires a "created mask", that is, a role that the individual undertakes under the influence of the antithetical force, a



role programmed by the Body of Fate and Will for his/her evolution and spiritual development. Yeats calls the created mask or "mask before phase 15" a "revelation" "because through it the being obtains knowledge of itself, sees itself in personality" (85). In contrast to the created mask, Yeats introduces the "imitative mask", that is solely the product of the Creative Mind. The imitative mask, according to Yeats, is "enforced" (85) or superficially created by society; more specifically, it arises out of the typical norms of society which are in their turn products of the Creative Mind. The imitative mask or "mask after phase 15" (85) is called by Yeats a

concealment . . . for the being grows incoherent, vague and broken, as its intellect [creative mind] is more and more concerned with objects that have no relation to its unity, but a relation to the unity of society or of material things known through the Body of Fate. (85)

According to Yeats, the imitative mask is a personality that is turned outwards, in contrast to the created mask that is turned inwards, toward self-expression and actualization.

The Creative Mind is the "intellect" (85) or the logical and rational human faculty that can be manifested through the medium of the five senses. In accordance with Yeats's psychological system, the Creative Mind is the faculty that "improvises the dialogue and the plot" (84) of an individual's life.

The Body of Fate, according to Yeats, is "the series of events forced upon [an individual] from without, is shaped out of the Daimon's memory of the events of his past incarnations" (83). In other words, it is what Yeats calls the "inherited scenario" (83) or the knowledge and the experiences that the individual has received from his/her past lives. The Daimon can be understood as a person's inner self or superego, or even as the Holy Guardian Angel.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>According to Kenneth Grant, the Holy Guardian Angel is "a term used by Iamblichos in his *De Mysteries*. Bulwer Lytton popularized the term in his occult novel *Zanoni*, where he interpreted it as meaning the Luminous Self or higher ego. The attainment of the knowledge of the H.G.A is the foundation of the training of a

In summarizing the function of each of the Four Faculties, Yeats specifically remarks about the antithetical character that:

The stage-manager, or Daimon, offers his actor an inherited scenario, the Body of Fate, and a Mask or role as unlike as possible to his natural ego or Will, and leaves him to improvise through his Creative Mind the dialogue and details of the plot. (84)

Thus the mission of the antithetical "actor" is in a sense to reach the state of "self-recognition," paradoxically by discovering his anti-self or his opposite. Yeats comments in A Vision that "[the antithetical actor] must discover or reveal a being which only exists with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active" (84). The primary character, however, should strive for self-recognition by actually turning his attention outwards and surrendering or losing himself/herself in an external cause or idea. Yeats points out that:

In the primary phases man must cease to desire Mask and Image by ceasing from self-expression, and substitute a motive of service for that of self-expression. Instead of the Created Mask he has an Imitative Mask; and when he recognises this, his Mask may become the historical norm, or an image of mankind. (84)

Yeats, however, identifies himself more with the idea of self-expression since it characterizes the antithetical force and certainly the artist himself. Yeats comments in A Vision that when self-expression is denied "and the Body of Fate is consumed in the Creative Mind, man is submissive and plastic" (82). It seems that human beings can escape this plasticity and submissiveness only by taking a circular journey towards self-completion, that is, by experiencing both the antithetical and primary forces which constitute their psyche. This circular journey is apparently a prerequisite for the birth of the new divinity; therefore, the mission of Yeats's A Vision is to show

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magician, and beside the Crossing of the Abyss constitutes the most critical stage in his development" (The Magical Revival 216).



the way towards the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, the way to the assimilation of the opposites that could eventually lead to the apotheosis of human beings.

The marriage of the opposites in Yeats's metaphysics is central to this sense of assimilation in A Vision. Cirlot, using Hegel's terminology, emphasizes the importance of this sacred marriage:

A Synthesis is the result of a thesis and an Antithesis. And true reality resides only in the Synthesis. . . . The symbol of the "centre", the blue rose, the golden flower, the way out of the labyrinth--all these can allude to the meeting and "conjunction" of the conscious and the unconscious as of the union of the lover and the beloved. Metaphors such as "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them" ("Isaiah" xi:6) are references to the final coming of the Heavenly Jerusalem where the binary synthesis is no longer dualistic severance or otherness, difference or separation, nor a balancing of opposing powers, but the assimilation of the lower by the higher, of darkness by light. (25)

Yet, Yeats has been criticized for his alleged inability to unite the opposites in the metaphysics of A Vision. Elizabeth Cullingford, for example, comments that: "Yeats who believes in the eternity of class war, rejects the optimism of Hegel and Marx" (122). But Cullingford's statement is not quite true. Yeats is certainly fully aware of the Hegelian synthesis, which he calls "Unity of Being" (81). In A Vision, the "unity of being" can be found in phase Fifteen, which Yeats calls "Sun in Moon" (82). Cirlot reminds us that "one of the most powerful poetic myths expressing the wish for cosmic unity is that in which it is said that the sun and the moon must be united so that they are made to form a single being" (25).

In A Vision Yeats certainly expresses the belief that the antinomies can be resolved; moreover, he believes that they cannot be resolved through death because, as he says, "death and life are its expression" (52). In addition, he is aware that "the marriage bed is the symbol of the solved antinomy" (52). In other words, Yeats

recognises, like Crowley and Pound, that sex brings together opposing forces<sup>28</sup> and is aware, given his occult knowledge, that through sex humans can aspire to a higher godlike consciousness, that through sex human beings can "lose and keep [their] identity" (52)--a wonderful expression for the merging of the opposites and the emergence of a new self. But Yeats is also aware of the limitations of human beings. He believes that "unity of being" can be attained, that the Great Wheel is always there waiting for the initiate to come and complete the cycle. But the journey is long and weary, and as Yeats wistfully comments, "Man falls asleep" (52), and "that sleep is the same as the sleep of death" (52). In fact, Yeats became so desperate about the increasing mediocrity of human beings that in his autobiography he writes: "I now know that there are men who cannot possess Unity of Being, who must not seek it or express it" (304). Yet, the "marriage bed" is not unattainable, and as Yeats asserts, "[it] could be more than a symbol could a man then lose and keep his identity, but he falls asleep" (52). Apparently, a human being who remains awake achieves the state of the new divinity (27). Thus, it becomes obvious that Yeats's unity of being presupposes the marriage of the opposites, and that the new divinity is probably the new state of consciousness which comes as a result of the union of the opposites.

Yeats's idea of unity of being is reflected in almost all major religions. According to Fritjof Capra, Chinese philosophy "has always emphasized the complementary nature of the intuitive and the rational and has represented them by the archetypal pair yin and yang" (Tao of Physics 14). The Secret of the Golden Flower,<sup>29</sup> teaches that duality is an illusion and a matter of conditioning from the

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<sup>28</sup>According to Grant "Sex constituted one of the greatest problems to governments and rulers during [the old primary cycle], because the ruling cliques were dimly aware that the sexual element had an obscure connection with individual creative potential. If allowed to manifest, this potential inevitably asserts its sovereignty and refuses to comply with the artificial standards of morality designed to enslave it. (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 197)

<sup>29</sup>According to its recent translator, Thomas Cleary, The Secret of the Golden Flower represents the "quintessence of the paths of Buddhism and Taoism" (1). Yeats had read the book (Richard Wilhelm's edition with the commentary by C. G. Jung), and



phenomenal world: "Sun and Moon are originally one thing . . . so I do not see duality; you just cling to the separation, so the separation has taken over your eyes" (48). In addition, D. T. Suzuki proclaims that:

The fundamental idea of Buddhism is to pass beyond the world of opposites, a world built up by intellectual distinctions and emotional defilements, and to realize the spiritual world of non-distinction, which involves achieving an absolute point of view. (qtd. in Capra, Tao of Physics 131)

This "absolute point of view," or Yeats's "unity of being" reflects Hudson's theory of "Genius." Indeed, according to Hudson, "the most perfect exhibition of intellectual power is the result of the synchronous action of the objective and subjective minds. When this is seen in its perfection the world names it genius" (50). For Roger W. Sperry, the "unity of being" would be probably the harmonious functioning of the left and right hemisphere of the human brain. And of course, it becomes apparent that the immediate new state of consciousness that would emerge is what Yeats called the new divinity.

Necessarily, Yeats had to avoid being explicit<sup>30</sup> about the issue of the new divinity. He points out in A Vision that:

I have already said all that can be said. The particulars are the work of the thirteenth sphere or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom. Doubtless for it can do all things and knows all things. It knows what it will do with its own freedom but it has kept the secret. (302)

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considered it as "invaluable . . . [and] a study of meditation that has not come out of the jungle" (Letters 788).

<sup>30</sup>Yeats was under an oath of silence since he was still a member of the Stella Matutina. The fear of breaking his oath is apparent in his essay "Magic": "and I look at what I have written with some alarm, for I have told more of the ancient secret than many among my fellow students think it right to tell" (Essays and Introductions, 51). And again: "it may be that there are beings who watch over that ancient secret, as all tradition affirms, and resent, and perhaps avenge, too fluent speech" (51).

The thirteenth cycle thus becomes mysterious and problematic. In the second version of A Vision, Yeats describes the thirteenth cycle as "The Ultimate Reality" (193). He makes it clear that this cycle is actually a "phaseless sphere" (193) that exists within humans, and is a symbol of the inherited freedom that human beings possess: "the thirteenth cycle is in every man and called by every man his freedom" (302).

Thus, according to Yeats, the thirteenth cycle exists in every individual and has the power to liberate human beings from the law of the antinomies. In Yeats: The Man and the Masks, Ellmann comments that: "All the determinism or quasi-determinism of A Vision is abruptly confronted with the Thirteenth cycle which is able to alter everything, and suddenly free will, liberty, and deity pour back into the universe" (282). Furthermore, the thirteenth cycle is probably Yeats's antithetical principle, Jung's unconscious, Hudson's subjective mind, and Sperry's right hemisphere of the brain. The antithetical principle or the thirteenth cycle represents, in a way, a higher level of consciousness compared to the primary principle, which is limited in its perception of reality only through the medium of the five physical senses. The antithetical principle, the unconscious, or the thirteenth cycle is in a semi-dormant condition because for the last two-thousand years it has been deliberately suppressed by the conscious state or primary cycle. The primary cycle, which was the dominant principle for two-thousand years, is the "image" bound to the law of "antinomies" which is going to give way to the "ultimate reality," the real "man" or the "daimon" that exists within humans. To the "daimon"-- that is, to the potential "man," the unconscious state or subjective mind that awaits expression and lives in the thirteenth cycle--"all things are present as an eternal instant" (193), but to the present limited reality, which is "bound to the antinomies" (193), that particular "instant is of necessity unintelligible" (193).

Yeats does not specify why he called that particular timeless region the thirteenth cycle, but we can speculate on the importance of the number thirteen. The number thirteen, according to esoteric philosophy, is a number associated with the



moon, and therefore is also associated with the female, the antithetical principle, the unconscious or the subjective mind. According to Grant, "the number thirteen is the lunar number par excellence, the number of the female and her periodic manifestations" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 87). Grant also remarks that the number thirteen "signifies unity because thirteen moons constitute a full circle or cycle, the lunar year of thirteen months of twenty-eight days" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 121). This is probably the reason why the number thirteen became for Yeats the ideal number to express in an other way the antithetical principle or unconscious which, according to Grant is the "repository of all images, all ideas, all concepts" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 126). Yeats was cryptic about that particular number since the number thirteen belongs to the antithetical cycle, and he was writing when he believed the civilisation was still under the icy domination of the primary cycle, that is, the solar patriarchal cult of institutionalized Christianity. Grant makes the significant remark that:

Because the number thirteen typified the moon and the female, the later cults, which based their reckoning of time not on the moon but on the sun, regarded the lunar images as accursed and identified them with ideas of darkness, disease and death. The number thirteen thereafter became the type-number of misfortune and uncleanness. (121)

Of the many reasons that prompted Yeats to call his timeless region the thirteenth cycle, the most important is his assertion that the thirteenth cycle constitutes a part of the divine human soul and offers a definite hope for salvation, since it has the power to "deliver us from the twelve cycles of space and time" (A Vision 210).

Referring back to the Great Wheel, Yeats informs his/her reader that the antithetical Hellenic world was replaced by the present primary one. During the composition of A Vision (ca. 1926) human civilisation, according to Yeats's cyclical theory, has reached its sixteenth phase. Yeats comments in the first edition of A Vision that "during the period said to commence in 1927 . . . must arise a form of

philosophy that will . . . be in all things opposite of that vast plaster Herculean image final primary thought" (214).

Thus, Yeats forcefully expresses his opposition to the "plaster Herculean image" and declares himself an apostle of the new antithetical age.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in A Vision, Yeats remarks that

When the new era comes bringing its stream of irrational force, it will, as did Christianity, find its philosophy already impressed upon the minority who have, true to phase, turned away at the last gyre from the physical primary. And it must awake into life . . . organic groups, covens of physical or intellectual kin melted out of the frozen mass.<sup>32</sup> I imagine new races, as it were seeking domination. (213-14)

Undoubtedly, Yeats saw himself "true to phase"; he was an artist, a poet faithful to the antithetical spirit, who had undertaken the mission to prepare the ground for the new antithetical age. In a letter<sup>33</sup> to John O'Leary, Yeats confesses, "I have always considered myself a voice of what I believe to be a greater renaissance, the revolt of the soul against the intellect--now beginning in the world" (Letters 211). Yeats, as a member of a coven himself, had as a mission to build a fire in the "frozen mass" of the final primary age and spread the seeds of the new religion to the world. Lady Gregory writes in her autobiography that Yeats's

occult ideas make him think there may be a revolution [in Ireland] coming on and Miss Gonne believes she has been "sent" to stir up disloyalty and though he thinks her hopes unreasonable, he thinks a prophet is an unreasonable person sent by providence when it is going to do an unreasonable thing. (352-3)

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<sup>31</sup>In the antithetical period, according to Yeats, the imaginative arts as well as individual thought would find their supreme expression.

<sup>32</sup>It can be understood as an icy or stagnant situation where primary thought dominates completely.

<sup>33</sup>Dated July 23, 1892.



Yeats's mission was "unreasonable" in the literary or antithetical sense of the word, since he was struggling against the "plaster Herculean image" which represents the primary principle or reason.

In "Dove or Swan", Yeats presents Heracles as both an image and a real man. Heracles as an image had to walk first on the earth and accomplish the twelve labours, and then escape fate and achieve union with the gods. Only through his apotheosis did Heracles become a man. Yeats urges his/her readers to pursue the state of new divinity and achieve apotheosis: "shall we follow the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand, or mount to that other Heracles, man, not image, he that has for his bride Hebe, 'The daughter of Zeus, the mighty, and Hera, shod with gold'?" (302). Yeats obviously embraces the Platonic idea that human life on earth is more like a shadow, that people are mere images walking in darkness, and that the images solidify only through unity of being. When unity of being is achieved, the shadows disappear; human beings become apotheosized, and the real "man" makes his/her appearance on earth.

Therefore, the Christian notion of the human being alienated from God ceases to exist; human beings are no longer subjects alienated from the original object. The longing of human beings to integrate with the divine source can be realized not in a supernatural realm or in an after death state of existence, but, according to Yeats, in the physical plane with the emergence of the new antithetical cycle that will be responsible for the dramatic transformation in the consciousness of human beings.

Thus, Yeats's religious affiliations are opposed to traditional Christian dogmas and beliefs. Yet Helen Vendler, in Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays, insists that "Yeats is not creating a counter system to Christianity . . . but rather abolishing imaginative monotheism in favour of a plurality of worship, since it is the single minded devotion demanded by Christianity which is natively repugnant to Yeats's imagination" (104). Vendler's statement is ambiguous and equivocal; one cannot be a Christian and at the same time deny the basic tenets of the Christian religion.

Actually, one who is in "favour of a plurality of worship" is a paganist. In fact, Yeats's dream was to create a system that could bring together the pagan and the Christian world. More explicitly, Yeats wanted to initiate a magical cult that would be located at the Castle on the Rock. In his autobiography, Yeats declares that he would perform at the Castle on the Rock "mysteries like those of Eleusis and Samothrace" (254), and believed that:

Invisible gates would open as they opened for Blake, as they opened for Swedenborg, as they opened for Boehme, and that this philosophy [expressed through his mystical order] would find its manuals of devotion in all imaginative literature. . . . I did not think this philosophy would be altogether pagan, for it was plain that its symbols must be selected from all those things that had moved men most during many, mainly Christian, centuries. ("Hodos Chameliontos" 254)

Similarly, in his Memoirs, Yeats says of the new cult that he wants to "initiate young men and women in this worship, which would unite the radical truths of Christianity to those of a more ancient world, and to use the Castle Rock for their occasional retirement from the world" (124).

Kathleen Raine, in Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn, sympathizes with Vendler's convictions about the orthodoxy of Yeats's religious beliefs. Raine tries to mask Yeats's paganism by claiming that some of the rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn were of a Christian nature. "According to some of the texts, the purpose was even more specifically Christian: 'To establish closer and more personal relations with the Lord Jesus, the Master of Masters, is and ever must be the ultimate object of all the teachings of our Order.'" (Yeats, The Tarot and The Golden Dawn 12). Raine does not disclose her source, but judging from the grandiloquence of the language one could assume that the statement in question was uttered by A. E. Waite,<sup>34</sup> the man responsible for the Christianization of the Order. But this alleged

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<sup>34</sup>After the break up of the Golden Dawn in 1903, a fraction was instituted under the leadership of J. W. Brodie Innes (Sub Spe), R. W. Felkin (Finem Respice), and A. E.



Christianization of the Order did not influence Yeats's ideology at all. On the contrary, Yeats was inimical to Waite's attempt to reform and eventually disrupt the unity of Stella Matutina by introducing the element of Christian mysticism. Francis King, in Modern Ritual Magic, comments that "the new temple [Waite's Reconstructed Rosicrucian Order] abandoned all magical work, abolished examinations within the Second Order and used heavily revised rituals designed to express a somewhat tortuous Christian mysticism. The ritual revisions had been carried out by Waite and it cannot be denied that the language used was exceedingly pompous and long-winded" (96). In addition, Harper, in Yeats's Golden Dawn, mentions that Waite and his group were in effect denying the validity of the philosophical premises that Yeats had struggled to establish in "Is the Order of R.R. & A.C. to remain a Magical Order?" Indeed, Yeats, in his 1901 manifesto, proposes that his fellow initiates "restore the Order to that state of discipline, in which many of us found it on our initiation into the Second Order some eight or nine years ago" (qtd. in Regardie, What You Should Know About the Golden Dawn 189); moreover, thinking about his mission [the accomplishment of the Great Work], Yeats declares that "we have set before us a certain work that may be of incalculable importance in the change of thought that is coming upon the world" (196). This particular "change of thought" that would lead to Yeats's new divinity would certainly be disrupted by Waite's intention to introduce into the order the rituals of the old primary cycle. Yeats adds in his manifesto that "if we preserve the unity of the Order, if we make that unity

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Waite (*Sacramentum Regis*). After a year of relative peace, Waite decided to break away and found his own fraction that he appropriately named the Reconstructed Rosicrucian Order. The Order was "characterized by its exclusive devotion to Christian mysticism, its rituals being elaborated into verbose and interminable parodies of turgidity" (Regardie, What You Should Know About the Golden Dawn 20). Simultaneously, apart from Waite's fraction, two other fractions were in operation, the Stella Matutina led by Felkin and Brodie Innes, and the other consisting of the members of the original Golden Dawn who remained faithful to Mathers. Felkin and Brodie Innes after a while decided to part and both initiated two different temples, Felkin the temple of Amoun in London, and Brodie Innes the temple of Amen Ra in Edinburgh.

efficient among us, the Order will become a single very powerful talisman, creating in us, and in the world about us, such moods and circumstances as may best serve the magical life, and best awaken the magical wisdom" (196). Therefore, Yeats was hostile to Waite's decision to incorporate into the Order Christian elements. As Harper comments:

Yeats . . . could not approve any group that denied the validity of magic and eschewed the necessity of examination for progress. Like Mothers and Mrs Emery, but for a different reason, Waite's group proposed to abandon discipline, order and hierarchy- that is, in effect, the whole Cabbalistic system of Degrees. That, to Yeats, was unthinkable. So he chose to affiliate with Felkin's group" (Yeats's Golden Dawn 125).

Moore goes along with Raine's convictions about Yeats's alleged belief in historic Christianity, and she even refers to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as the "Christian-Cabalistic secret order" (3). What is puzzling about Moore's speculations about Yeats's orthodoxy is that in spite of her acknowledgement of Yeats's belief in astrology, reincarnation, and magic in general, she still insists in her conviction that Yeats was a devout Christian. Not even Yeats's belief in the archetypal trinity, that the Golden Dawn conceded, that is, the two opposites and their reconciliation point, deters Moore from her presumptions. Furthermore, Moore asserts that a Christian is somebody who acknowledges Christ as a saviour. The question then is whether Yeats recognized Christ as Saviour, and whether he acknowledged the Original Sin and Fall of humanity. The answer to these questions is negative; if Yeats believed in the existence of Christ as saviour, he would not bother to proclaim in A Vision the advent of a new divinity, and declare himself its apostle or prophet. My conjecture is that Yeats was a believer in the Gnostic Christ, the archetypal force that represents the human immortal principle. Since he was familiar with the tradition of the coming Messiah at the end of each great year, as he confesses in Book iv of A Vision, and since he was an occultist almost all of his life, Yeats was



surely aware of the esoteric interpretation of this tradition, which was based purely on astronomical terms and not on terms that concerned human history. Gerald Massey, who exhaustively treats the subject in his works, points out that

the prophesy of fulfilment was solely astronomical and the Coming One as the Christ who came in the end of an age [precession of the equinox] or of the world, was but a metaphorical figure, a type of time, from the first, which never could take form in historic personality. . . . The history in our Gospels is from beginning to end the identifiable story of the Sun-God, and the Gnostic Christ who never could be made flesh ("The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ" 10).

By referring back to A Vision, and to the chapter on Ezra Pound, we can see now the importance of the difference between the "abstract sky" and the "earth." The abstract sky is the prototype of the old divinity, the institutionalized Christian religion characterized by its patriarchal tendencies and its emphasis on duality. In the Christian religion, God exists in an abstract state, outside the human sphere, and is an object of worship. In Yeats's "new divinity", Christ, who apparently represents the ascending human spirit, the Gnostic Christ, significantly turns toward the earth, to the Great Mother. Therefore, Yeats's choice to link Oedipus with the "new divinity" is not accidental. Oedipus belongs to the pagan world, many elements of which are acknowledged in Yeats's metaphysics. Of course, Yeats is not a pantheist, at least not in the sense that Vendler implies by claiming that Yeats is "in favour of a plurality of worship" (104). However, he can be considered a pantheist because of his metaphysical belief in the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, that is, in the omnipresence of the divine element. But most importantly, Yeats turns his attention to the neglected body, and to the oppressed female principle in the human psyche. Thus, Yeats's mission is to revive the antithetical female element and to equate it with the male primary one. In the pagan world, Matriarchy was recognized and the Body was glorified, while in the patriarchal religions, such as

Judaism and Christianity, the Spirit replaced the Body, and the Father replaced the Mother.

The need for a synthesis, therefore, is necessary. As Grant comments, "the balance of these extremes is effected by the realization of the identity of Matter and Spirit, Body and Mind, Female and Male. Such realization occurs through the passionate union of the opposites" (Cults of the Shadow 111). The "passionate union of the opposites," which is in fact the nature of the Great Work that Yeats was sworn to accomplish, leads to the unity of being and eventually to the apotheosis of human beings.

Yeats's intention to revive the suppressed female element is apparent in his metaphysics. A Vision is actually a paean to the moon, since the pivot of the book itself, the Great Wheel, represents the moon<sup>35</sup> and its twenty-eight phases, upon which the human character is analyzed and the history of the world explained. In A Vision, "the full moon is Phase 15" (78), a phase which Yeats characterizes as one of "complete beauty" (135). According to Yeats, "Phase 15 is called Sun in Moon because the solar or primary tincture is consumed by the lunar, but from another point of view it is Mask consumed in Will; all is beauty" (82). Harold Bloom, in Yeats, draws a parallel between the "new divinity" and Phase 15. He points out that the "new divinity . . . is that unnamed 'successor' to Christ who is prophesied at the close of the account of Phase 15" (238). According to esoteric tradition, Phase 15 is associated with the Goddess 15; as Gerald Massey points out, "Goddess 15 was a title of Ishtar or Astarte, the lunar deity of Akkad" ("Lectures in Luniolatry" 18). Significantly, "Astarte or Ishtar is the eastern equivalent of the Greek Aphrodite, the Goddess of love and fruitful increase." (Oxford Companion to English Literature 46)

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<sup>35</sup>Cirlot in A Dictionary of Symbols comments that "When patriarchy superceded matriarchy, a feminine character came to be attributed to the Moon and a masculine to the Sun" (204).



In the second book of A Vision, "The Completed Symbol," Yeats remarks that "After it [the primary cycle] must come an age begotten by the East<sup>36</sup> upon the West. . . . The Lunar Months of 2200 years apiece, in a year of 26000 years are years of civilisation, while the Solar Months of a similar symbolical length correspond to periods of religion" (203). In a similar manner, Yeats mentions in "The Great Year of the Ancients" that in the "beginning of a new era, the antithetical East will beget upon the primary West and the child or era so born will be antithetical" (257). Yeats seems to be suggesting that the new era will have an antithetical character, that is, it will contain pagan elements and will be the product of the union between the East and the West; or, in other words, the magical-philosophical ideas of the pagan mysteries will infuse a new spirit into the stagnant primary Western thought. The turbulent child of this perichoresis, as Yeats wittily comments, "will take after its mother"<sup>37</sup> (203). Expressed in Egyptian mythological terminology, the primary Aeon is the Aeon of Osiris which was preceded by the Aeon of Isis whose interpenetration yields in the present the Aeon of Horus, who is the child of Isis and Osiris. According to Grant, the present "age of Horus superseded the Aeon of Osiris, which was typified by the rise and fall of such religions as Judaism and Christianity. Previous to that was the Aeon of Isis, the Pagan era many elements of which are reappearing in the present Aeon" (Magical Revival 214). Grant also agrees with Yeats that Horus is the "child or essence of the mother alone" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 235), and aligning himself with Yeats's belief in the unity of being, comments that in the Aeon of Horus "this dualistic approach to religion will be transcended through the abolition of god and the establishment of Unity -Man will no longer worship god as an external factor as in Paganism- or as an internal state of consciousness as in Christianity, but will realize his identity with god" (Cults of the Shadow 200). Oedipus represents the

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<sup>36</sup>According to Yeats "East . . . is not India or China, but the East that has affected European civilization, Asia Minor, Messopotamia, Egypt" (A Vision 257).

<sup>37</sup>"The mother is symbolic of the collective unconscious, of the left and nocturnal side of existence--the source of the water of life" (Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols 208).

same unity as, just before he vanishes into the earth, he was seen to "kneel, worshipping Earth, and Heaven/ The abode of gods, both in one act, together" (Oedipus Colonus 307).

Before we proceed to the next section, to the examination of Crowley's manifesto The Book of the Law, we would like to stress that Yeats's turbulent child or antithetical revelation coincides with Crowley's crowned and conquering child or aeon of Horus. Crowley's Horus, the offspring of the union between Nuit and Hadit (the feminine and masculine principles in the human soul respectively), having assimilated the qualities of Hadit, directs its attention to the Mother-Goddess. Grant emphasizes this preference:

In the Cult of Thelema the conflict is finally reconciled by the exaltation of the child, or combined essences of both cults, [refers to the conflict between the devotees of the Sun (primary, masculine principle), and the devotees of the Moon (antithetical, feminine principle)] but Horus the child is the child of the Mother alone, and the masculine component (bindu) that engendered him, though present is unknown. As it is written in AL [The Book of the Law]: 'In the sphere I am everywhere the centre, as she, [Nuit, Mother-Goddess] the circumference, is nowhere found'. (83)

Furthermore, Hadit predicts in The Book of the Law that "She shall be known & I never" (ii,4). In fact, the masculine principle symbolically disappears, since it has served its function and can no longer assist in the development of human consciousness. In other words, it is the realization of human beings that science has reached a dead end, that compelled the child, or 'immortal principle in man,' to turn its attention to the Mother, to the feminine principle, which is characterized by holistic vision. As Baring and Cashford comment, "humanity's first image of life was the Mother" (9), and that the Mother "gives birth to the forms of life that are herself" (40). Thus, both 'children' in Crowley and Yeats's manifestos proclaim the dawn of a new period, and both emphasize the fact that the predominant characteristics of this new world order will be antithetical or feminine. This is important because it reveals that



both writers, in a metaphorical sense, were the prophets of the same religion, and not apostles of adversary creeds, one being a Christian, for instance, and the other the antichrist, as Raine, overtly, claims in Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn.

### **The Book of the Law, A Vision, and the Equinox of the Gods**<sup>38</sup>

In 1904, Crowley received The Book of the Law, or Liber Al Vel Legis, allegedly declaring that he had come in contact with the Secret Chiefs of the Third Order of the Golden Dawn. According to Crowley's account, the Secret Chiefs bid the former to help humanity in its spiritual evolution by revealing the sacred knowledge of the occult tradition and by making the contents of Liber Al known. As Crowley himself points out, "the chief duty which They laid upon me was to publish the secret wisdom of the Ages. . . . I was to issue a compendium of the methods by which man may attain the God-head" (Confessions 404). To this end, Crowley, in 1907, founded the Order of the Argenteum Astrum (Silver Star), a fraction of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and in 1909, published the Equinox, a periodical which was "The Official Organ of the A A, the Review of Scientific Illuminism" with the motto, "The Method of Science, the Aim of Religion". The Equinox was the "compendium" that would "preserve the Sacred Tradition, so that a new renaissance might in due season rekindle the hidden light, I was accordingly to make a Quintessence of the Ancient Wisdom, and publish it in as permanent a form as possible. This I did in The Equinox" (Magick Without Tears 457). Meanwhile, Crowley, with the purpose of propagating his religious beliefs and political ideas, published his own literary works at his own expense, disinterestedly calling himself the 'Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth'. Crowley remarks in his Confessions: "I had simply no idea of business. Besides this, I was in no need of money; my responsibility to the gods was

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<sup>38</sup>According to Grant, this is a "technical term [in esoteric philosophy] denoting a change of Aeon when a new influence radiates through the stellar girdle (zodiac) of the Cosmos affecting radical changes in human and other forms of consciousness" (Magical Revival 218).

to write as I was inspired; my responsibility to mankind was to publish what I wrote. But it ended there. As long as what I wrote was technically accessible to the public through the British Museum, and such places, my hands were clean" (406).

Both Crowley and Yeats envisaged a new renaissance coming in the world, and both nominated themselves prophets or apostles [of the powers] responsible for this renaissance. Even though the two poets were dissimilar in aspects of personality and idiosyncrasy, the basic premises of their ideology were the same, and both were the prophets of the same divinity. Crowley's entire vision revolves around the human being, which is actually the new divinity that will replace the external divinity of the old patriarchal primary cycle. The renaissance is based upon the belief in the powers and 'will' of human beings. When Crowley received The Book of the Law in 1904, he claimed that the book was of a supernatural origin. In 1927, Yeats made the same assertion about his book A Vision (1917).

Coincidentally, the wives of Crowley and Yeats played crucial roles in the receipt of The Book of the Law and A Vision respectively. Yeats's wife, Georgie Hyde-Lees, brought Yeats in contact with his communicators by means of automatic writing. As Yeats notes in A Vision, "On the afternoon of October 24th 1917, four days after my marriage, my wife surprised me by attempting automatic writing" (8). Crowley's wife, Rose Kelly, when she and Crowley were on their honeymoon in Cairo, on the 16th of March "got into a strange state of mind" (393), as Crowley explains in his autobiography, and related to her husband that "They [communicators] are waiting for you" (393), and that "it is all about the child" (393). Furthermore, Rose, who had no idea of magic whatsoever, being apparently in the same trance-like state, instructed Crowley on how to "invoke Horus". On March 21, 1904, Crowley successfully invoked Horus, and as a prologue to what would follow, a voice announced that "The Equinox of the Gods had come", and that "a new epoch had begun" (394). Rose, in another trance, possibly at the beginning of April 1904, notified Crowley that "exactly at noon on April 8th, 9th and 10th" he had to enter the



room where he performed his ceremonies to Horus and "write down what I heard, rising exactly at one o'clock" (Confessions 395). Crowley followed his wife's orders and The Book of the Law was born.

Liber Al, like Yeats's A Vision, is an apocalyptic work. Crowley insisted that its 'dictator' was a superhuman entity named Aiwass, who claimed to be "a messenger of the Lord of the Universe, and therefore [he could] speak with absolute authority" (Confessions 396), or, as Crowley mentions in his introduction to Liber Al, "The Author . . . claimed to be the 'minister of Hoor-paar-Kraat', that is, a messenger from the forces ruling this earth at present" (5). Similar to A Vision, Liber Al purports to be a philosophical and religious manifesto. Crowley states in the introduction that "This Book explains the Universe" (7); it deals with the forces which constitute the macrocosm and microcosm, and tries to establish the relationship between them, that is, between the laws of the universe and the human psyche, or else between human beings and God. At the same time, Crowley points out in his autobiography that Liber Al "claims to answer all possible religious problems" (396) by introducing a new morality that springs from the law of Thelema<sup>39</sup>, which is based on the maxim, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" or "There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt"; furthermore, Crowley states that "Thelema implies not merely a new religion, but a new cosmology, a new philosophy, a new ethics" (399). Thus, Liber Al also becomes a historical manifesto, since it proclaims the advent of a new historical period, the Aeon of Horus, that will promote "the recognition of the individual as the unit of society" (12), and release humanity from the fetters of the patriarchal religions of the old primary cycle or Aeon of Osiris.

Symbolically, Liber Al consists of three chapters; in the first two chapters, there is the interplay between the two opposing forces, Nuit and Hadit, which

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<sup>39</sup>'Thelema' is an Hellenic word which means 'Will'. In Liber Al the word 'Thelema' is written in Hellenic, and as Crowley notes, it has the same numerical value as the Hellenic word 'Agape' which means 'Love', and is of equal importance to the word 'Will'.

symbolize the macrocosm and microcosm respectively. In addition, Nuit stands for femininity, the moon, the water, the circle, the earth, the north, the pentagram, absolute subjectivity, and Yeats's antithetical force, while Hadit symbolizes masculinity, the sun, the air, the point, the fire, the south, the hexagram, the creative will, absolute objectivity, and Yeats's primary force. The interplay of these two powers culminates in their fusion, which finds expression in the third chapter of Liber Al, where the child (Horus) emerges announcing the commencement of the new epoch. In his attempt to explain the universe and the relations of human life therewith, Crowley acknowledges the philosophical thought of dualism. The idea of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God is not sufficient for Crowley, because it presupposes a consistency which does not exist on earth. The mere existence of evil, Crowley would claim, contradicts these qualities of God and supports the dualistic conception of the universe. In Magick Without Tears, Crowley comments that "the first thing that we notice on inspecting the universe is what the Hindu schools call 'the Pairs of Opposites'" (54).

Both Crowley and Yeats believe in the dual nature of the universe and the human psyche, and both emphasize in their works the need for a synthesis. In A Vision, the union of the primary and antithetical forces creates a "unity of being" that engenders a new state of consciousness that Yeats calls "new divinity", that is, the apotheosis of human beings. In Liber Al, the assimilation of Nuit and Hadit accomplishes, according to Crowley, the Great Work, which engenders Horus or the child, which is the "immortal principle in man" (Grant, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 153). On a microcosmic level, Horus is the divine element in the human psyche which encompasses the qualities of the two opposing forces, and on a macrocosmic level symbolizes the new epoch or state of consciousness that will supersede the old patriarchal primary cycle. Crowley explicitly states in Magick Without Tears that "[the Great Work] is the uniting of opposites. It may mean the uniting of the Soul with God, or the microcosm with the macrocosm, of the female



with the male . . . " (7). Thus, the union of the opposites is for Crowley and Yeats<sup>40</sup> a prerequisite for the further development of human beings. Significantly, Crowley did not think these forces antagonistic or hostile to each other. In Magick in Theory and Practice, Crowley points out that "we see no enmity between right and left, Up and Down, and similar pairs of opposites. These antitheses are real only as a statement of relation; they are the conventions of an arbitrary device for representing our ideas in a pluralistic symbolism based on duality" (36). In the same treatise, Crowley states that the "Microcosm is an exact image of the Macrocosm; the Great Work is the raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of Infinity" (4). Notably, the Nag Hammadi Library is literally bristling with extracts of Gnostic maxims that express the same idea. In the "Gospel of Philip", Christ exclaims: "Light and Darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers of one another. They are inseparable" (142); In the "Gospel of Thomas" (11:2), Jesus urges his disciples to accomplish the Great Work, or to achieve Unity of Being by assimilating the opposites: "when you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same . . . then will you enter [the kingdom]" (129). Thus, the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, the destruction of the dyad and the impending union with God, will give rise to a new state of consciousness in the human psyche that will cut across the borders of the Ego and render possible a universal brotherhood. Grant comments in Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God that, "Sociologically speaking [the assimilation of the opposites] may imply the dissolution of all barriers which hinder the free interchange of nations, races, and sexes; an instantaneous union of entities, which owing to artificial codes of conduct, have been considered disparate and unfusable" (185). Crowley believed that the new epoch, the Aeon of Horus, would

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<sup>40</sup>Yeats expresses in the first edition of A Vision the Gnostic belief that, "Evil is that which opposes Unity of Being" (230).

destroy those "artificial codes of conduct" which were products of the primary patriarchal Aeon of Osiris.

Thus, the macrocosmic projection of the two opposing forces can interpret human history itself. Crowley, in Magick in Theory and Practice, using Egyptian mythological terminology, purports to explain human history. Yeats's antithetical cycle becomes for Crowley the Aeon of Isis, the primary cycle becomes the Aeon of Osiris, and finally, Yeats's new divinity, that A Vision proclaims, becomes for Crowley the Aeon of Horus.

The Aeon of Isis alludes to the pagan, pre-Christian Stellar and Lunar cults, where the Mother-Goddess or female principle reigned. The Goddess was associated with the Moon, since at that period (Palaeolithic), as Grant notes, "the mechanism of paternity was still a mystery, and still unknown that the moon did not shine by her own light. It was supposed that she renewed herself in the heavens by giving birth to her self conceived child with which periodically she became full" (Cults of the Shadow 46). In addition, the Mother-Goddess was identified with Nature and earth; human beings worshipped a multiplicity of gods, since everything was permeated by the divine presence of the Goddess and therefore sacred.

But along with the evolution of consciousness, human beings realized the importance of the Father in the generative process; at the same time, the struggle for survival and the establishment of the first settlements led to the need for a closer and more analytical examination of the phenomenal world, which eventually resulted in the development of the powers of the left hemisphere of the brain. Consequently, the feminine artistic qualities were no longer held in esteem, and the Mother-Goddess deserted Nature. Baring and Cashford comment that "From Babylonian mythology onwards (c.2000 BC), the Goddess became almost exclusively associated with 'Nature' as the chaotic force to be mastered, and the God took the role of conquering or ordering nature from his counterpole of 'Spirit'" (xii). Accordingly, polarization emerged, the Spirit and the Body became two separate and hostile realities, and



human beings glorified a deity external to nature and themselves. Grant comments that the conflict "between the devotees of the Sun and those of the Moon and Stars determined the nature of all later cults, however civilized their final form" (51). Thus, the Aeon of Osiris or Primary patriarchal cycle is characterized by the predominance of the masculine principle that finds expression in a male deity separate from human beings and nature itself. Baring and Cashford significantly comment that

for the last 4000 years, the feminine principle, which manifests in mythological history as the 'goddess', and in cultural history as the values placed upon spontaneity, feeling, instinct and intuition, had been lost as a valid expression of the sanctity and unity of life. In Judaeo-Christian mythology there is now, formally, no feminine dimension of the divine, since our particular culture is structured in the image of a masculine god who is beyond creation, ordering it from without; he is not within creation, as were the mother goddesses before him. This results, inevitably, in an imbalance of the masculine and feminine principles, which has fundamental implications for how we create our world and live in it. (xii-xiii)

Crowley believed that the new cycle would terminate the imbalance between the opposites and give rise to a new religion that would transcend the duality of the old one, bringing forth the much-desired unity in the human psyche and the world. In Cults of the Shadow, Grant justifies Crowley's belief that he was chosen by the gods to spread the seeds of the new epoch to the world, and points out the change in the aeons:

[The Book of the Law] was transmitted at a point in time-April 8,9,10 1904, which coincided with an astronomical change of equinoctial colure. . . . This expression means that the sun, previously having shed its influence through the constellation Pisces for some 2,000 years, now radiates through the star-complex known as Aquarius. This means that if one looks up at the sun at the vernal equinox, it appears with the first degree of this constellation as its background. . . . With the advent of the vernal equinox in the year 1904, Crowley was therefore able to claim that the new Era or Aeon that had dawned was ineluctably associated with the revelation that he received in Cairo at that time, and, because of certain passages in AL, he named it the Aeon of Horus. (105-6)

Grant adds that today "we are experiencing . . . the death-throes of the old [primary cycle, Aeon of Osiris] and the birth-pangs of the new [antithetical cycle, Aeon of Horus]" (106).

The third chapter of Liber Al narrates, according to Crowley, "the characteristics of the period on which we are now entered" (11), or rather, as Crowley explains in his autobiography, describes "its spasms of transitory passion" (400). Crowley states in his autobiography that the "child is not merely a symbol of growth, but of complete moral independence and innocence" (400). Therefore, in order to effect moral independence, the child-god invokes violence, destruction and war. It proclaims itself a "god of War and of Vengeance" (39), and threatens to "deal hardly" (39) with the advocates of the patriarchal religions. As for the primary religions, in words that even Crowley found "gratuitously atrocious" (Confessions 403), the child-god expresses its dissent harshly:

With my Hawk's head I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross.

I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed and blind him.

With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the Buddhist, Mongol and Din. (Liber Al, III, 51-53)

At the same time, the child-god glorifies war and incites its followers to venerate it with "fire and blood" (III, 11), as well as with "swords and spears" (III, 11), and urges them for its sake to "let blood flow" (III, 11). Crowley, although disturbed<sup>41</sup> by the declarations of Horus, foretells that, indeed, the transitive period that<sup>42</sup> the Aeon of

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<sup>41</sup>Crowley notes in his Confessions that initially his attitude towards Liber Al was not at all sympathetic: "I resented The Book of the Law with my whole soul. . . . I was bitterly opposed to the principles of the Book on almost every point of morality. . . . My soul, infinitely sad at the universal sorrow, was passionately eager to raise humanity. And lo! the Magical Formula denounced pity as damnable, acclaimed war as admirable and in almost every other way was utterly repugnant to my ideas" (403).

<sup>42</sup>It seems that the aeon which supercedes the Aeon of Horus will be the aeon that will bring the promised equilibrium. Crowley notes in his autobiography that "she [the aeon that precedes Horus, Thmaist, the Double-Wanded One, or Maat (Justice) shall



Horus commences, will be a period of continuous turmoil, until the Law of Thelema is established fully in the mentality of human beings. The signs of this transitive period, as Crowley describes them in his introduction to Liber Al, are disturbing and reminiscent of today's world; therefore, it is necessary to quote them in their entirety:

Everywhere his [Horus] government is taking root. Observe for yourselves the decay of the sense of sin, the growth of innocence and irresponsibility, the strange modifications of the reproductive instinct with a tendency to become bi-sexual or epicene, the childlike confidence in progress combined with nightmare fear of catastrophe, against which we are yet half unwilling to take precautions. Consider the outcrop of dictatorships, only possible when moral growth is in its earliest stages, and the prevalence of infantile cults like Communism, Fascism, Pacifism, Health Craze, Occultism in nearly all its forms, religions sentimentalized to the point of practical extinction. Consider the popularity of the cinema, the wireless, the football pools and guessing competition, all devices for soothing fractious infants, no seed of purpose in them. Consider sport, the babyish enthusiasms and rages which it excites, whole nations disturbed by disputes between boys. Consider war, the atrocities which occur daily and leave us unmoved and hardly worried. We are Children. How this new Aeon of Horus will develop, how the child will grow up, these are for us to determine, growing up ourselves in the way of the Law of Thelema . . . (12-3).

Like Crowley, Yeats firmly believed that a new cycle was beginning in the world. In the first edition of A Vision, Yeats prophesized that "during the period said to commence in 1927 . . . must arise a form of philosophy which will . . . be in all things opposite of that vast plaster Herculean image, final primary thought" (214). Yeats believed, like Crowley, that the present time is an interim period, since the influx which dominates an antithetical civilisation comes "a considerable time before the close of the preceding primary dispensation" (A Vision 208). Yeats was not cherishing the illusion that the transition from the old primary cycle to the new

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bring the candidates to full initiation, and though we know little of her peculiar characteristics, we know at least that her name is Justice" (400). For further information about the Aeon of Maat, see Grant's Two Thyphonian trilogies, and Frater Achad's Egyptian Revival, and Q.B.L or Bride's Reception.

antithetical one would necessarily bring unity of being and paradise on earth. In fact, Yeats had expressed his belief that the "day is far off, when the two halves of man can divine its own unity in the other as in a mirror. Sun in Moon. Moon in Sun, and so escape out of the Wheel" (215). Moreover, Yeats believed, like Crowley, that the oncoming antithetical age, or the turbulent child of the Altar, in its course to establish its influence on the world, would inevitably cause turmoil in the religious status-quo and in world affairs generally. Yeats writes in his autobiography that Mathers, his mentor at that time, "began to foresee changes in the world, announcing in 1893 or 1894, the imminence of immense wars" (225). In A Vision, Yeats declares that "after an age of necessity, truth, goodness, mechanism, science, democracy, abstraction, peace, comes an age of freedom, fiction, evil, kindred, art, aristocracy, particularity, war" (52). Considering "the terror that is to come" (50), Yeats, in a Crowleyan tone, extols the merits of war: "Dear predatory birds, prepare for war, prepare your children and all that you can reach, for how can a nation or a kindred without war become that 'bright particular star' of Shakespeare that lit the roads in boyhood?. . . . Love war because of its horror, that belief may be changed, civilisation renewed" (52-3). Moreover, Yeats, in his autobiography, heeds and questions the religious restlessness of the people:

Why are these strange souls born everywhere today? with hearts that Christianity, as shaped by history, cannot satisfy. . . . Why should we believe that religion can never bring round its antithesis? Is it true that our air is disturbed, as Mallarme said, by the 'trembling of the veil of the temple,' or 'that our whole age is seeking to bring forth a sacred book'? (210)

Furthermore, Yeats, in words strangely reminiscent of Crowley, exclaims in "Michael Robartes Foretells":



I insist upon the paradox that the old age of our civilisation begins with young men marching<sup>43</sup> in step, with the shirts and songs that give our politics an air of sport. Phase 24 will perform the task of Augustus,<sup>44</sup> but the end of our civilisation will differ from that of an antithetical civilisation. The imitation of those who seem to express most completely the mass mind, the discovery of the mass mind in ourselves, will create a political system, more preoccupied with the common good, more derived from the common people, than that of Rome and Later Greece. Yet as phase 25 draws near in 30 or 60 years . . . men will . . . return to women, horses, dogs, prefer to the political meeting, the football field or whatever 30 or 60 years hence may have taken its place. (17)

### Crowley's Law of Thelema

Crowley proclaims in his introduction to Liber Al that the establishment of the Thelemic Current is "the only way to preserve individual liberty and to assure the future of the race" (15). Grant, whose credentials make him an authority on esoteric philosophy, talks about the importance of the Aeon of Horus, or antithetical period, and warns of the imminent danger that humanity risks by neglecting the oncoming current which has the power to "bring about a cataclysm such as that which submerged Atlantis" (Cults of the Shadow 125). Furthermore, Grant points out that

Most people are reluctant to recognize, much less interpret, the ominous portents manifesting now at the dawn of the Aeon. It is a hard saying, but the survival of the individual will depend upon the degree to which he has assimilated and identified himself with the Thelemic Current, whether he happens to have heard of Crowley or not. This Current is characterized by elasticity, fluidity, an ability for spontaneous adaptation. (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 195)

Crowley considered the dangers that would arise from the estranged relationship between communism and capitalism. He seriously contemplated the possibility that

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<sup>43</sup>The uniform of the soldiers and the identical march suggest uniformity and lack of individuality.

<sup>44</sup>That is dictatorship. Yeats further notes that "dictatorships in various parts of the world, including the Russian are the approach of the 24th phase". Crowley, as we have already shown, expressed the same idea in his introduction to Liber Al.

the cold war between the two would inevitably result in a holocaust, and that the only solution to avert the catastrophe was the emergence of a new creed, though not necessarily through a bloody, social revolution.<sup>45</sup> In a letter to Norman Mudd, dated May 1924, Crowley stresses the existing danger between the two ideologies: "The struggle for life between the Capitalist and the Red has become constantly more acute and is now being brought to a crisis everywhere. . . . The one hope of avoiding a conflict which would be finally fatal . . . lies in a spiritual revolution" (qtd. in Grant, Magical Revival 113).

Crowley believed that the law of thelema would bring about this spiritual revolution. Since the child-god archetype symbolizes change, evolution, and independence, its ethics are diametrically opposed to those of Christianity, which Crowley considers obsolete and against human evolution itself. The law of the new aeon is summarized in the maxim, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law"; it expresses a purely aristocratic, elitist philosophy, in opposition to the humble and restrictive philosophy of Christianity. The morality that the child-god proclaims does not tolerate pity and restriction in any form:

We have nothing with the outcast and the unfit: let them die in their misery. For they feel not. Compassion is the vice of kings: stamp down the wretched & the weak: this is the law of the strong: this is our law and the joy of the world. . . . Be strong, o man! lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this. . . .

But exceed! exceed! (ii, 21-2,71)

Crowley justifies this Spartan attitude by claiming that when we pity an individual, we automatically violate and, in a way, insult his/her sacred individuality, since Liber Al proclaims categorically that "every man and every woman is a star" (i,3), that is, a

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<sup>45</sup>Crowley explicitly states in his autobiography that he was "absolutely opposed to any ideas of social revolution" (539). Apparently, his aristocratic idealism was in conflict with the idea of social change among the classes.



distinct personality with a specific purpose and destiny on earth. Furthermore, since the progression of the race depends on the few, strong, charismatic individuals who possess genius,<sup>46</sup> it is logical then to encourage genius and not sacrifice it on the altar of mediocrity and weakness. Crowley notes in his autobiography that by protecting the "weak and the vicious from the results of their inferiority . . . we perpetuate the elements of dissolution in our own social body" (401).

The most important, yet misunderstood aspect in Crowley's philosophy is the idea of the 'Will'. Liber Al proclaims a new set of ethics which allegedly liberate human consciousness from 'twenty centuries of stony sleep,' since it unleashes the suppressed instinctual forces that Jung considers vital for human evolution. Accordingly, in the new aeon, as Nuit declares in Liber Al, "the word of Sin is Restriction" (i,41), and human beings have "no right but to do [their] will" (i,42). In a letter to Norman Mudd, dated 1923, Crowley states that his "business in life is to bring men to the realization of their true selves and the dynamic expression of their True Wills" (qtd. in Grant, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 186). After a closer consideration, "Do what thou wilt," does not express merely the view that everyone has the right to satisfy his/her whim irresponsibly. While Liber Al's equivocal statement might declare a haven of freedom, it also creates restrictions, since it demands enormous self-discipline on the part of the individual to discover his/her inner inclinations and talents and thus actualize himself/herself. Once the individual has actualized himself/herself, that is, realized his/her true will, then the concept of freedom takes on a special importance; human beings become aware of their free will and liberate themselves from the bondage of passivity and boredom of purposeless life. Consequently, they cease to rival each other and live harmoniously, striving to

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<sup>46</sup>Grant comments in Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God that, "in the Aeon of Osiris, genius was a comparatively rare phenomenon; so much so that some "official" scientists actually treated it as a pathology! Crowley realized that genius should be the rule, not the exception. He maintained that by systematic training he could unveil or invoke the genius of any individual" (199).

fulfil their unique destinies. Crowley elucidates the idea of the true will in a letter to an aspirant, dated April 6, 1923:

We conceive of you, and of every other conscious ego as stars. Each has its own orbit. The law of any star is therefore the equation of its movement. Having taken into account all the forces which act to determine its direction, there remains one vector and one vector only in which it will move. By analogy, the True Will of any man should be the expression of a single definite course of action, which is determined by its own characteristics and by the sum of the forces which act upon him. When I say 'Do what thou wilt' I mean that in order to live intelligently and harmoniously with yourself, you ought to discover what your True Will is by calculating the resultant of all your reactions with all other individuals and circumstances, and having done so, apply yourself to do this will instead of allowing yourself to be distracted by the thousand petty fancies which constantly crop up. They are partial expressions of subordinate factors, and should be controlled and used to keep you to the main purpose of your life instead of hindering you and leading you astray. (qtd. in Grant, Cults of the Shadow 111)

Grant points out that true will presupposes the "Attainment<sup>47</sup> of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel." This ritual, though, presupposes an existent state of equilibrium or unity in the human psyche; in other words, unity of being is a prerequisite for self-actualization. Crowley points out in his Magical Record that "The True Will is the *resultant of the totality of the forces* of the universe expressed through the individual. That Will is moreover the final necessary component of the equilibrium of the universe, without which it could not be [italics mine]" (165). Grant adds that "The invocation of the True Will necessarily and automatically invokes its opposite" (112). Yeats, in A Vision, expresses the same idea. Yeats's true will, is an intuitive, divine force, raw energy or the life force itself, whose purpose is to help human beings actualize themselves. It does so by helping

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<sup>47</sup>It refers to a particular ritual, published in Magick in Theory and Practice under the technical title Liber Samekh. It was intended for those who had reached the grade of Adeptus Minor for the purpose of finding their true will.



individuals comprehend their opposing personality traits and become conscious of the concept of unity of being. In other words, 'will' helps individuals to assimilate the opposites and acquire self-knowledge. Yeats emphatically states in A Vision that the Will, "only by the pursuit or acceptance of its direct opposite, that object of desire or moral idea which is of all possible things the most difficult, and by forcing that form upon the Body of Fate, can it attain self-knowledge and expression" (83). Furthermore, Yeats, like Crowley, commenting upon the oncoming antithetical period associates goodness with the true will, and God with the human genius: "[the antithetical period] will make little of God or any exterior unity, and it will call that good which a man can contemplate himself as doing always and no other doing at all. . . . Men will no longer separate the idea of God from that of human genius, human productivity in all its forms" (A Vision, 1st ed. 214-15).

### **The Two Magicians as Poets**

Yeats and Crowley considered imagination as the most important human faculty. As trained magicians, they perceived that imagination and poetry thereby, was the only possible link between human beings and God. As Yeats points out in "The Symbolism of Poetry", the poet assumes the status of a prophet, and replaces the priest that becomes "[the poet's] shadow" (125). In his commentary on Blake, Yeats points out that Blake

had learned from Jacob Boehme and from old alchemist writers that imagination was the first emanation of divinity, "the body of God," "the Divine members," and he drew the deduction, which they did not draw, that the imaginative arts were therefore the greatest of Divine revelations . . . imagination divides us from mortality by the immortality of beauty, and binds us to each other by opening the secret doors of all hearts. (Essays 112)

Imagination becomes synonymous in Yeats and Crowley's mind with the new antithetical cycle or aeon of Horus. In Essays and Introductions, Yeats comments that

"imagination . . . has been laid in a great tomb of criticism", and he concludes that "this age of criticism is about to pass, and an age of imagination, of emotions, of moods, of revelation, about to come in its place; for certainly belief in a supersensual world is at hand again" (197).

Yeats and Crowley committed themselves to the unravelling of the abstruse metaphysical thoughts of this supersensual world. For this aim, Yeats manipulated archetypal symbols in order to convey through his poetry the basic esoteric ideas that he expressed in A Vision and his plays<sup>48</sup>. F. A. C. Wilson comments that "Yeats passionately caught after the archetypal connotation of his symbols before he began to coin them. . . . If we do not like to think of the poet manipulating his symbols to given ends, we are left to suppose that towards the same ends his symbols manipulated him" (Yeats's Iconography 15). Yeats communicated through his poetry his basic metaphysical belief that a new antithetical age was at hand, which would replace the precedent primary one and bring forth the deification of human beings. Before we proceed to examine some of Yeats's emblematic poems that illustrate the above idea, we should turn and examine briefly Crowley's poetry in relation to his occult ideas.

Crowley, even though a talented poet himself, failed to cultivate his talent and reach Yeats's status. Crowley was a man of intense physical action and most of his poetry reveals his adventurous, amorous, and restless temperament, as well as his lack of inner discipline and will for hard work necessary for the creation of good poetry. In "De Profundis" from his collection Mysteries, Crowley expresses his agony over the existential dilemma, and stresses the importance of the artist, whom Crowley

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<sup>48</sup>A sufficient analysis of Yeats's metaphysical plays would require a book by itself. F. A. C. Wilson's Yeats's Iconography, examines brilliantly the metaphysical ideas expressed in Four Plays for Dancers and The Cat and the Moon. Vendler also examines from the esoteric point of view Yeats's later plays, such as The Player Queen, A Fool Moon in March, The King of the Great Clock Tower, The Dreaming of the Bones, Words upon the Window-pane, Purgatory, and the three Cuchulain plays: At the Hawk's Well, The Only Jealousy of Emer, and The Death of Cuchulain.



considers the priest-magician of the new antithetical age or age of Horus, the crowned and conquering child:

Lo, we are blind, and dubious fingers grope  
 In despair's dungeon for the key of hope;  
 Lo, we are chained, and with a broken rhyme  
 Would file our fetters and enlarge our scope  
 . . . . One poet's song may bid a kingdom fall. (18: 1,4-19: 4)

Mysticism and magick soothe the anguish of the poet who aspires to disperse himself in divine ecstasy and unite his soul with the divine:

Yea, also verily Thou art the cool still water of the wizard fount. I have bathed in Thee, and lost me in Thy stillness.  
 Behold! I am a butterfly at the Source of Creation; let me die before the hour, falling dead into Thine infinite stream! (Holy Books of Thelema iii: 49,53)

In "The Star-Goddess Sings", Crowley presages the Equinox of the Gods, that is the end of the old primary period and the commencement of the antithetical age of Horus:

For brighter from age unto age  
 The weary old world shall renew  
 Its life at the lips of the sages  
 Its love at the lips of the dew.  
 With kisses and tears  
 The return of the years  
 Is sure as the starlight is true. (Orpheus 5:1-7)

Furthermore, in the Holy Books of Thelema, and in "Orpheus Invokes the Lords of Khem", Crowley glorifies the child-god Horus, the son of the Great Goddess, and identifies it with the eternal human principle, revealing thus his belief in the apotheosis of human beings:

O Thou Son of a light-transcending mother, blessed be Thy name, and the Name of Thy Name, throughout the ages!

Glorious, glorious, glorious are Thou, O my lover supernal, O Self of myself.

For I have found Thee alike in the Me and the Thee; there is no difference, O my beautiful, my desirable One! In the One and the Many have I found Thee; yea, I have found Thee. (iii: 52,64,65)

Yeats, unlike Crowley, was a man of intense intellectual action. He perceived the importance of the divine power of the imagination and poetry, and became as F. A. C. Wilson notes, "one of the most highly conscious craftsmen in our language" (14). In "The Tower" (1926), Yeats expresses his belief in the commencement of the new antithetical age. When he asserts that "being dead we rise/ Dream and so create/ Translunar Paradise," he refers to the life in death condition of the last primary cycle, and the resurrection of the new antithetical one, where human beings by "dreaming", that is, by using the faculty of creative imagination can create and transform the earth into a "Translunar Paradise". The word translunar is indicative and quite appropriate, since the moon has always been associated by Yeats with the oncoming antithetical cycle and the unconscious, the abode of creative imagination. In the same poem, Yeats declares his faith in the divine nature of human beings, and renders them responsible for everything on earth:

I mock Plotinus thought  
And cry in Plato's teeth,  
Death and life were not  
Till man made up the whole,  
Made lock, stock and barrel  
Out of his bitter soul,  
Aye, sun and moon and star, all . . .

In "Sailing to Byzantium" (1926), Yeats expresses his desire to leave behind and forget "these dying generations," that is, the old dying primary cycle, and move to the holy city of Byzantium<sup>49</sup> and become one with the antithetical spirit. "Sailing to

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<sup>49</sup>Yeats comments in A Vision: "I think if I could be given a month of antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium . . . in early Byzantium,



Byzantium" glorifies the faculty of creative imagination; in fact, the poem is an invocation to the exalted power of imagination, or to the highest antithetical consciousness. Yeats invokes the sages<sup>50</sup> who abide by "God's Holy Fire" (iii: i), beyond mortality, to become the "singing masters of [his] soul" (iii: iv). He pleads the masters to initiate him into the highest mysteries of human soul, to give him understanding and wisdom, and help him reach the "artifice of eternity" (iii: viii). The artifice of eternity corresponds to Yeats's idea of the thirteenth cycle or new divinity, which can be reached only when unity of being has been obtained. Yeats, once being in the artifice of eternity, will be "out of nature" and he "shall never take/ [his] bodily form from any natural thing" (iv: i,ii), that is, once having attained the thirteenth cycle, Yeats will escape the great inexorable wheel of earthly incarnations. Having achieved unity of being, and having succeeded in reaching the thirteenth cycle, Yeats becomes the Blakean bard who sings "of what is past, or passing, or to come." Having escaped the limitations of the earthly self and having united in his soul the two opposites, he can transcend and perceive everything as a whole.

"The Tower" collection of poems is Yeats's "tour de force" because, in these poems, Yeats makes the profound declaration that the artistic imagination is the only possible means of the soul's liberation from the icy primary cycle. In "The Tower" poems, Yeats through the instrument of his artistic imagination manages to create order out of disorder. In other words, he manages to exorcise and transform the violence of the Irish civil war into beautiful and well-ordered works of art.

Having survived the bitterness of the civil war, Yeats, through the aid of his artistic imagination, reasserted his faith in the new antithetical age. Yeats's "Leda and

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maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one" (279).

<sup>50</sup>From a qabalistic point of view, and since we know that Yeats was at that time an Adeptus Exemptus, we can assume that he invokes the secret chiefs or masters who reside supposedly on the third and last division of the Golden Dawn society or triangle of the Tree of Life. The last triangle of the Tree of Life [Kether (crown)-Binah (Understanding)-Chokmah (Wisdom)] is beyond mortality and self.

the Swan," on the one hand, indicates the predominance of Yeats's artistic mastery over the brutality of the civil war, and on the other hand declares once again his faith in the coming of the new antithetical period. In fact, "Leda and the Swan" was preceded by Yeats's poems "Two songs from a Play," and "Fragments," which according to Peterson, "celebrate the resurrected god, symbolic of the beginning of a new age" (W. B. Yeats 140). The rape of Leda, as well as "The Second Coming," become landmarks in Yeats's poetry of his faith in the emergence of the new antithetical cycle, a cycle that would bring forth unity of being and engender the new divinity. Yeats, however, in "Leda and the Swan" still wonders whether human beings have the potentialities to achieve unity of being. Yeats asks, whether Leda "did . . . put on [his] knowledge with his power?" that is, whether human beings will embrace the new antithetical cycle and receive open-heartedly its knowledge.

"The Second Coming" becomes an apocalypse and compendium of the philosophical ideas expressed in A Vision. In "The Second Coming" Yeats describes the circumstances which precede the end of the primary cycle and prophesizes the commencement of the new antithetical cycle. The title of the poem itself is highly ironic, since for Yeats the second coming stands for the end of the primary cycle and the commencement of the new antithetical one, not for the Christian interpretation of the second coming as the coming of Christ the Redeemer and Saviour.<sup>51</sup> During the end of the primary cycle

Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold;  
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
 . . . Surely some revelation is at hand;  
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand. (402)

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<sup>51</sup>Ellmann hints at this idea in Yeats: The Man and the Masks (233).



The Christ, however, that appears in Yeats's poem is a sphinx-like being with "lion body and the head of a man" and with a "gaze blank and pitiless as the sun" (402). The sun image is a characteristic of the primary cycle with its emphasis on dry reasoning, and the prevalence of the solar, patriarchal, constitutionalized religion of Christianity.<sup>52</sup> The "blank gaze," however, signifies the antithetical spirit; Yeats, in A Vision, identifies this gaze with that of the Hellenic statues which were created during the last antithetical period: "when I think of Rome I see always those heads with their world-considering eyes . . . and compare in my imagination vague Grecian eyes gazing at nothing" (277). The "vague Grecian eyes" reveal the antithetical spirit because their gaze is turned inwards, towards the inner self and the unconscious, in contrast to the gaze of the Roman statues where the attention is turned outwards, to the phenomenal world. Therefore, it seems that the new-born beast combines both primary and antithetical characteristics and probably represents Yeats's belief that the new cycle will bring unity of being. And yet, while Yeats is watching the vultures<sup>53</sup> or "desert birds" circling above the dying primary period, the "darkness<sup>54</sup> drops," and the new cycle emerges. At once, Yeats proclaims that "twenty centuries of stony sleep/ Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle." In other words, two-thousand years of icy primary domination is coming to an end, since a new "beast . . . at last slouches towards Bethlehem to be born" (402). In "The Second Coming," by announcing the birth of the new cycle, Yeats certainly expresses hope, but at the same time expresses

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<sup>52</sup>George Russell, in a letter to Yeats, comments, "I agree with you that we belong to the coming cycle. The sun passes from Pisces to Aquarius in a few years. Pisces is phallic in its influence. The waterman is spiritual, so the inward turning souls will catch the first rays of the new Aeon" (quoted in Ellmann Yeats: The Man and the Masks 121). The sign of Pisces is associated with Christianity.

<sup>53</sup>The vultures or "desert birds" symbolize the repressed pagan elements that seek revenge over the dying primary cycle. According to Cirlot, "In Egyptian hieroglyphs, the sign of the vulture . . . stands for the idea of the Mother" (A Dictionary of Symbols 342). The importance of the Mother in Yeats's "new divinity" is obvious and further explained in this chapter.

<sup>54</sup>The unconscious, the female, and thus the new antithetical cycle.

his fears and premonitions about the turmoil that the new Equinox of the gods will bring before it fully establishes its influence on the planet.

Yeats up to the very end of his life never ceased to believe in the future greatness of the human spirit, and never betrayed his apostolic mission to spread the seeds of the new antithetical age. Like the guardians of the tower in Yeats's last poem "The Black Tower," Yeats never betrayed his duty, which was to "stand . . . on guard oath-bound" to the antithetical spirit or chthonic esoteric tradition and its commands. Like Yeats, Crowley swears that he "would not gain release, and die/ A moment ere my task be done" ("The Rosicrucian", ix: 2-5).



## Chapter 3

### Pound and the Forces of Intelligence

#### Introduction

Pound's association with the esoteric tradition has already been established, despite niggling by orthodox Pound scholars. Surette, in The Birth of Modernism, declares that "the spectre of the occult is now being raised on clear-cut evidence for Pound. . . . Lofty disregard is no longer appropriate" (9). Tryphonopoulos, in The Celestial Tradition, divides Pound scholarship into three schools:<sup>1</sup> mainstream Pound scholars, who refuse to give thought to Pound's connection with the occult; critics who appreciate Pound's association with the occult, but deny any influence on Pound's literary opus; and scholars who recognize the "importance of occult speculation to Pound's work" (Tryphonopoulos xiv).

Tryphonopoulos, a student of Surette, identifies himself with the third group of thinkers, as he concurs with MacDowell and Materer that Pound was "deeply committed to occult studies" (qtd. in The Celestial Tradition xiv). In The Celestial Tradition, Tryphonopoulos argues convincingly for Pound's involvement in the occult; he examines the esoteric tradition and concurs with Surette that its "intellectual content . . . is almost wholly derived from the Hellenistic period" (xv); and, finally, he studies Pound's The Cantos, demonstrating (following Kay Davis's lead in Fugue and Fresco) that the work aims to have a palingenetic effect on the reader, that is, it "enacts an initiation for the reader" (xv) into a "higher plane of existence" (xvi).

Surette, in The Birth of Modernism (the sequel to A Light from Eleusis), elaborates further on Pound's relationship with the occult; he considers Pound a

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<sup>1</sup>According to Tryphonopoulos, the best representatives of the first school are: Hugh Kenner, Wendy Flory, and James J. Wilhelm. The second school includes such critics as Clark Emery, Herbert N. Schneidau, and James Longenbach. The best known critics who belong to the third group are Noel Stock, Kay Davis, Akiko Miyake, Carroll F. Terrell, Angela Elliott, Timothy Materer, Leon Surette. Demetres Tryphonopoulos himself belongs to the third group.

visionary poet, with affinities to writers such as Blake and Yeats; he examines Pound's belief in the conspiracy of intelligence, considering The Cantos as a work "intended to reveal the hidden truth about the conspiracies--both malign and benign--that have formulated the past, control the present, and generate the future" (64). Furthermore, Surette reads The Cantos as an "occult interpretation of history" (36) whose purpose is to "announce the birth of a new age" (67).

In this chapter, we will discuss Pound's connection with the esoteric tradition, specifically with the chthonic esoteric tradition; we will demonstrate Pound's participation in the conspiracy of the subconscious, which had as an explicit end the raising of the female principle in the human consciousness. We will also examine The Cantos under the prisma of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and demonstrate its religious character as well as its aspiration to accomplish the Great Work and proclaim, like Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, and Graves's The White Goddess, the birth of a new divinity, identified with the divine human principle, or Gnostic Christ, embodied in the figure of the Great Goddess.



## The Rebel

Colin Wilson describes the Outsider as an individual who

cannot live in the comfortable, insulated world of the bourgeois, accepting what he sees and touches as reality. 'He sees too deep and too much', and what he sees is essentially *chaos*. For the bourgeois, the world is fundamentally an orderly place, with a disturbing element of the irrational, the terrifying, which his preoccupation with the present usually permits him to ignore. For the Outsider, the world is not rational, not orderly. When he asserts his sense of anarchy in the face of the bourgeois' complacent acceptance, it is not simply the need to cock a snook at respectability that provokes him; it is a distressing sense *that truth must be told at all costs*, [Wilson's emphasis] otherwise there can be no hope for an ultimate restoration of order. (The Outsider 15)

Pound, whom Flint describes as a "poet with a distinct personality . . . a rebel against all conventions except sanity" (qtd. in Carpenter, A Serious Character 116), conforms to Wilson's description of the Outsider. Pound, like Yeats, Crowley, and Graves, was a revolutionary, unconventional artist, who was obsessed throughout his life with the idea of building "a dream over the world" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 244), that is, of striving for the inauguration of a new world order in which the artistic spirit and imagination would conduct human behaviour. According to Carpenter, Pound believed that the "earthly paradise could really be built, the Utopian society genuinely achieved through the efforts of determined individuals" (A Serious Character 25). Furthermore, Stock points out that Pound was always fighting for the sake of "independence for the artist in his work, independence for the 'party of intelligence' in its fight against stupidity, and independence for an aristocracy of taste whose function was to be a model of how to live" (The Life of Ezra Pound 227).

Pound's desire to shake the foundations of the bourgeoisie inevitably led him into a disagreement with the religious status quo, that is, with patriarchal Christianity. Stock and Carpenter, in their biographies on Pound, testify that Pound's religious upbringing was thoroughly Christian. Pound's parents, Homer and Izabel, were devout

Presbyterians; Homer was one of three trustees of the church (Carpenter, A Serious Character 21), and also a Sunday school teacher (Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 7). Carpenter points out that when Ezra Pound was eleven years old (that is, in 1897) he professed formally his "faith at the Calvary Presbyterian church in Wyncote. During childhood he was in his own words 'an earnest Christian' who read the Bible 'daily' and took religion 'with great seriousness'" (A Serious Character 29). Indeed, in Guide to Kulchur, Pound attests that "[he] was brought up in American school and Sunday school. Took the stuff for granted, and at one time with great seriousness" (301). However, Christianity could not satisfy Pound's religious yearnings, for when he started to investigate Christian dogmas and beliefs, what he found was "disgusting" (Pound, Guide to Kulchur 301). What Pound apparently considered disgusting was the tendency of monotheistic religions to interfere<sup>2</sup> with the creative genius of the individual, by suppressing individuality and expecting conformity to certain rules that are destructive for the individual, and which are designed especially to govern the masses. In "Axiomata", Pound observes that "the greatest tyrannies have arisen from the dogma<sup>3</sup> that the theos is one, or that there is a unity above various strata of theos which impress its will upon the sub-strata, and thence upon human individuals" (Selected Prose 51).

Dissatisfied with Christianity--which was for Pound "verminous with semitic infections" (Selected Prose 71)--but still eager for faith, Pound declared in "Statues of

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<sup>2</sup>Pound, in "Imaginary Letters", claims that Christianity "has reduced itself to one principle: 'Thou shalt attend to thy neighbour's business in preference to thine own'. It is upon this basis that the churches are organized, it is upon this basis that they flourish" (Pavannes and Divagations 71). Furthermore, according to Pound, evil is "messing into other people's affairs. 'Against this principle of evil no adequate precaution is taken by Christianity, Moslemism, Judaism, nor, so far as I know, by any monotheistic religion'". The principle of good consists in "establishing order within oneself" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 270), that is, in self-knowledge and self-actualization. In other words, good for Pound is the Gnostic idea of turning inwards towards self-knowledge and understanding the inner god, while evil is turning outwards to the material plane.

<sup>3</sup>Pound defines "dogma" as "bluff based upon ignorance" (Guide to Kulchur 49).



Gods" his appeal for a "European religion" (Selected Prose 71), and confessed that what he really wanted to believe in was "the pre-Christian element which Christianity has not stamped out" (71). The pre-Christian element that Pound refers to is Eleusis, which in ancient times constituted, as Robert Graves has amply demonstrated,<sup>4</sup> the official religion of the Mediterranean basin, in other words, the cult of the Great Goddess, whose esoteric mysteries were worshipped during the Eleusinian mysteries. According to Pound, the emergence of patriarchal Christianity in the religious scene of the western world did not succeed in extinguishing altogether the cult of the Goddess of Eleusis. Pound believed that its light persisted "throughout the middle ages and set beauty in the song of Provence and of Italy" (Guide to Kulchur 53). Emery, in Ideas into Action, points out that Pound "has tried to awaken his readers to the living religion which underlies the dead cerebralization of contemporary Christianity by compelling their attention towards those epochs when in the Mediterranean basin it was alive, and toward the conditions under which such life is possible" (17). Thus, Pound turned to the cult of the Great Goddess in his quest for religion, and like Yeats, Crowley, and Graves, sought to revive the creed of the Goddess. In "Credo", Pound explicitly declares that "given the material means [he] would replace the statue of Venus on the cliffs of Terracina. [He] would erect a temple to Artemis in Park Lane" (Selected Prose 53).

Pound's interest in the cult of Eleusis and his belief that the cult of the Goddess persisted in the early Church and in the middle ages, causing "some of the scandals"<sup>5</sup> (Selected Prose 58) or heresies that troubled early Christianity, lead us to conclude that

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<sup>4</sup>See particularly The White Goddess, The Greek Myths, Difficult Questions, Easy Answers, The Hebrew Myths, King Jesus, and The Nazarene Gospel Restored. For further information on the cult of the Great Goddess in Europe see the first chapter of the present study as well as Marija Gimbutas The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, The Language of the Goddess, The Early Civilizations of Europe, and Anne Baring and Jules Cashford The Myth of the Goddess.

<sup>5</sup>Pound refers to the heresy of the Albigenses which was responsible for inspiring the song of the troubadours.

Pound derived his information from the esoteric tradition that also inspired Yeats, Crowley, and Graves. Mainstream Pound scholars, unenlightened in esoteric philosophy, do not seriously consider Pound's interest in the occult<sup>6</sup> nor the occult's influence on his literary work. One of the first critics to take Pound's fascination with the occult seriously is Clark Emery, who in Ideas into Action (1958) recognises the significance of the "tradition of the undivided light" (11) in the shaping of Pound's philosophical thought. Emery understood, from an esoteric point of view, the implication of the light imagery in Pound's work (especially in The Cantos) and also considered seriously the religious<sup>7</sup> character of Pound's epic.

More recently, Leon Surette has dealt more closely with the impact of the occult on Pound's life and work. In A Light from Eleusis (1979), a study which primarily deals with Pound's The Cantos, Surette examines extensively Pound's occult inspiration, interpreting The Cantos as a "collection of poetry" (vii) unified by the element of Eleusis; he also hints at the theme of the assimilation of the opposites in The Cantos. Surette, in his latest work, The Birth of Modernism (1993), declares openly his belief that "Ezra Pound was as thoroughly imbued with the occult as Yeats himself was" (5), and contemplates Pound's<sup>8</sup> treatment of the theme of secret history. Furthermore, Surette considers The Cantos as a fin de siècle work which incorporates the history of the "wisdom which lies dormant in the world . . . but which periodically bursts forth in spurts of creativity" (The Birth of Modernism 124), and which also proclaims the wisdom's "imminent efflorescence" (The Birth of Modernism 124).

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<sup>6</sup>Pound, unlike Yeats and Crowley, was not interested in the sphere of practical occultism which include theurgy and ritualistic magic. He contemplated more the theoretical aspects of the esoteric tradition, that is, metaphysical theories and ideas.

<sup>7</sup>Another critic who believes in the religious character of The Cantos is Carroll F. Terrell. Terrell, in Ideas in Reaction, considers Pound's epic as "the greatest religious poem of all time" (13).

<sup>8</sup>Pound was familiar with the works of Barruel and Rossetti who believed in a sinister conspiracy responsible for all the major political events in Europe that had as its purpose the destruction of political and religious status quo.



Demetres Tryphonopoulos, in The Celestial Tradition (1992), following Surette's lead, thoroughly examines Pound's occult education. He agrees with Surette that The Cantos reflects the esoteric conviction in the coming of a new age, and interprets The Cantos as a work whose mission is to initiate the reader, to make the reader "undergo the confusion, disorientation, and catechesis of the initiand" (103), so that he/she will "arrive at a revelation and be transformed from a participant in the mysteries (mystes) to an epoptes, one who 'has seen' or experienced the ineffable secret" (103). Tryphonopoulos and Surette underestimate, however, Pound's concern with the female principle, the nature of Eros in the element of Eleusis, and the deep religious character of The Cantos, a work which is inextricably connected with the new age's scheme to inaugurate a new divinity.

Noel Stock, in Poet in Exile, comments that Pound "was much interested [in the subject of the occult] before he arrived in London, and the influence of people like Yeats, Mead, and Upward kept his interest alive when he was giving most of his attention to other matters" (21). Indeed, as Carpenter and Tryphonopoulos indicate, Pound's first<sup>9</sup> encounter with the occult came through Katherine Ruth Heyman, a concert pianist with a strong occult bent. Carpenter, in his biography of Pound, states that Heyman was a "devotee of the occult, enthusing over theosophy, ectoplasms, and tarot cards" (A Serious Character 49). Pound's appreciation of Heyman is revealed in a 1904 letter to his mother, in which he describes her as a "person with brains and sense once and a while" (qtd. in Carpenter, A Serious Character 48). Tryphonopoulos, after examining Pound's association with Heyman as well as Hilda Doolittle's subsequent initiation into the occult by Pound, concludes that "the congruity between Pound's views before and after his Kensington 'initiation' strongly indicates that he

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<sup>9</sup>It is worthwhile to mention that Pound's grandfather Thadeus Pound, as Pound points out in "Indiscretions", was also interested in the realm of the supernatural. As Pound indicates, Thadeus "took up . . . phrenology; also spiritualism; had some credit for the healing touch, and performed, I believe, in company with his brother Albert, a tour of spiritual or magnetic healing and demonstration" (Pavannes and Divagations 12).

brought his occultism with him to London, and did not encounter it there for the first time" (The Celestial Tradition 68). Pound's major initiation into the occult occurred, however, as Stock indicates, "during [his] years in London, from 1908 until 1921. Pound read and talked with a number of authors who were interested in mysticism, the occult and old religions, among them W.B. Yeats, G.R.S. Mead, and Allen Upward" (Poet in Exile 20).

Pound visited London at a time when Yeats and almost all of the British intelligentsia dealt with the arcane. David S. Thatcher, commenting on the magical revival that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, states that "critical exegesis of the Bible during the nineteenth century had resulted in a re-emphasis on the mystical and sacramental side of Christianity as opposed to its doctrinal content, and towards the end of the century there was a strong revival of mysticism, spiritualism, and theosophy" (219). Mead,<sup>10</sup> in The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in the Western Tradition, describes London's intellectual atmosphere as "thick with rumours of psychism, spiritism, theosophy, occultism, Christian Science, new thought, magic and mystery and mysticism of every grade. The dead have come forth from their tombs and the veil of the temple is rent once again in these days of catastrophic upheaval" (107). These "days of catastrophic upheaval" refer to the theory of cyclic revolution, that is, to the occult interpretation of the astronomical theory of the Precession of the Equinoxes, according to which the vernal equinox, moving backwards along the zodiac, visits one sign at a time every two-thousand years. Massey points out that two

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<sup>10</sup>Mead (1863-1933) was a distinguished theosophist, Blavatsky's personal secretary from 1889 to 1891, and until 1897 the general secretary of the European theosophists. In 1909, Mead, because of scandals caused by Leadbeater's sexual misconduct, broke away from the Theosophical Society and initiated the Quest Society. Mead was also a prolific writer on occult themes, as well as on Gnosticism and the origins of Christianity. Mead's books and essays, such as Fragments of a Faith Forgotten (1900), Thrice-Greatest Hermes (1906), The World Mystery: Four Comparative Studies in General Theosophy (1907), and "The Rising Psychic Tide" (1911-1912) were appreciated and much-read among the coven of the 'initiands' who participated in Yeats's Monday evenings, and in the meetings of the Quest Society.



thousand years ago, circa 255 BC., in the course of precession, "the vernal birthplace passed into the sign of the Fishes, and the Messiah who had been represented for 2155 years by the Ram or Lamb, and previously for other 2155 years by the Apis Bull, was now imaged as the Fish" (The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ 7-8). The transitional period between the end of the old cycle and the beginning of the new is considered catastrophic because, as occultists believe, new Messiah will be born like a phoenix out of the ashes of the old morality and religions. Mead, in Fragments of a Faith Forgotten, remarks that "mysterious Time is once more big with child and labouring to bring forth her twentieth babe" (3); and again, Mead asks rhetorically, "can any who keenly survey the signs of the times, doubt, but that now at the dawn of the twentieth century, among Christian nations, the general nature of thought and feeling in things religious is being quickened and expanded, and as it were is labouring in the pains of some new birth?" (5). The nature of this new birth was, according to Yeats and Crowley, the birth of the child of the Mother alone, that is, of a new state of consciousness which would liberate human beings from the limitations imposed by reason, scientific materialism, and dogma, and which would release the divine aspect of human beings, that is, the Gnostic Christ, or son of the divine anthropos, from the bonds of the material universe. Yeats and Crowley refer cryptically to this new consciousness as of the Mother alone to indicate its origins in the old European cult of the Mother Goddess, that is, in the feminine aspects of the human mind.

The commencement of this new state of consciousness, which was equated in the minds of London's intelligentsia with the divinization of human beings, was truly expected, and was commonly debated in occult and philosophical circles. According to Mead's terminology, the Gnostic Christ or son of the Divine Anthropos, is human's Subtle Body, which, according to the beliefs of the old "astral religion", that is, of the cult of the Great Goddess, was a "subtle organon of great nature, an interior economy of the world-soul. Man's nature was so to say an excerpt from this greater nature, and it was conceived of as a germ or seed as it were of the universal tree of life" (The

Doctrine of the Subtle Body 9). According to Allen Upward,<sup>11</sup> the new age would bring forth "the son of man", that is, the son of the divine anthropos or Gnostic Christ, which also corresponds to Nietzsche's superman. In his essay "The New Age", Upward remarks that "the Son of Man is the Overman. Not the conquering capitalist of Nietzsche's unhappy vision, but the spiritual Overman, the teacher, the pioneer, in a word the prophet,--for Nietzsche himself, rather than Rockefeller, seems to be the Overman" (qtd. in Upward 328-329). Upward agrees with Mead on the nature of the new divinity, and identifies the new Messiah with human genius, the artistic, independent, prophetic spirit which, in a conspiratorial way, attempts to establish its rightful position in the human consciousness.

In addition to Mead and Upward, Alfred Richard Orage,<sup>12</sup> an important literary figure, contemplated seriously the idea that the new age would bring forth the superman. In his essay "Superman Consciousness", Orage, echoing Nietzsche, points

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<sup>11</sup>Allen Upward (1863-1926), a regular contributor to Orage's The New Age, after Orage's own invitation: "It was his [Orage's] original proposal that I should develop my ideas on the subject of the Overman, in correction of Nietzsche. And I made a serious effort to obey the call" (Upward, The Divine Mystery 7). "The Son of Man" appeared in the January 1910 issue of The New Age, as well as "The Order of the Seraphim" (a prelude to The Divine Mystery), in 1921-22, "The Nebular Origin of Life" was also published in The New Age. In addition to The Divine Mystery, Upward published The New Word (1901), another work which attempts to establish the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Pound's review of The New Word appeared in The New Age on 23 April 1914.

<sup>12</sup>Orage (1873-1934) joined the Theosophical Society in 1896. At the beginning of his career as a journalist and editor, he was greatly influenced by Nietzsche, and at a later stage in his life by Gurdjieff. Orage was the editor of the Leeds Arts Club (1893-1905), The New Age (1907-1922), and the New English Weekly (1932-1934). Orage was also interested in Depth-psychology; according to his biographer, "psychology, together with theosophy and idealized philosophy, represented a natural bent of his mind" (Mairet, A.R. Orage: A Memoir 79). Tryphonopoulos claims that at "Orage's initiative, a 'psychosynthesis' group was formed which included Havelock Ellis, David Eder, James Young, Maurice Nicoll, J.A.M. Alcock, and Rowland Kenney" (81). For further information about Orage, see Philip Mairet A.R. Orage: A Memoir, Orage Selected Essays and Critical Writings, Orage as Critic, Beatrice Hastings The Old 'New Age' Orage--and Others, and David S. Thatcher Nietzsche in England 1890-1914. -



out that "the main problem of the mystics of all ages has been the problem of how to develop super consciousness, of how to become superman", and that "superman is not the contradiction but the fulfilment of man" (qtd. in Thatcher 244-245). Furthermore, Orage, in his essay "On Religion", declares that it is the obligation of human beings in the new age to "understand and to co-operate with the intelligent laws that govern [the Universe]; [and] that in order to accomplish this a special way of life<sup>13</sup> or technique is necessary; and that this technique<sup>14</sup> consists primarily in a method of 'divinizing', that is to say, of raising to a higher conscious level Man's present state of being" (Selected Essays and Critical Writings 209). The technique or special way of life that Orage refers to concerns the practical aspect of occultism, whose methods and techniques Yeats and Crowley were well aware of, since both were members of organized occult societies. Mead, Upward, Orage, and Yeats played important roles in Pound's occult paideuma. Yeats and Crowley's ideas about the imminence of a new age that would bring forth a new divinity were not the eccentricities of bizarre occultists, but standard beliefs among sections of the British intelligentsia of the time.

Pound was not indifferent to these fin de siècle ideas, but accepted them and incorporated them in his works. Tryphonopoulos points out that Pound's "catechesis under Yeats was an education in the occult through Yeats's occult friends" (The Celestial Tradition 74). Indeed, during his stay in London, Pound met and made friends with Orage, Upward, and Mead, who were the most important exponents of new age ideas. Surette indicates that Pound during his London years, was a regular participant in the meetings of the Quest Society "organized by Mead in Kensington Town Hall" (The Birth of Modernism 34); "other participants [in the Quest Society meetings] included . . . Orage, Upward, Evelyn Underhill . . . Weston, Dorothy

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<sup>13</sup>Asceticism, for instance, is a special way of life, as well as its other extreme, which for Crowley is the "lust" and enjoyment of "all things of sense and rapture" (The Book of the Law 31)

<sup>14</sup>Pound refers openly and extensively in his works to the element of Eros (tantric element) as a powerful technique for raising the human consciousness to illumination.

Shakespear, W.B. Yeats, Harriet Shaw Weaver, Wyndham Lewis, Rebecca West, and T.E. Hulme" (34). The Quest Society, initiated by Mead in 1909, was a fraction of the Theosophical Society. According to Mead, the Quest Society's objectives were: "1. To promote investigation and comparative study of religion, philosophy and science, on the basis of experience, and 2. To encourage the expression of the ideal in beautiful forms" (qtd. in Letters of Ezra Pound to Dorothy Shakespear 62). The Quest Society published its own review, The Quest, edited by Mead, to which Pound was a contributor<sup>15</sup> along with other prominent literary figures such as Yeats, Jessie L. Weston, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, and Denis Saurat.

Allen Upward, another participant in the Quest Society meetings, became Pound's friend and occult mentor. Carpenter remarks that Pound was fascinated by Upward's occult knowledge, and that at the end of September 1913, "he went down to Upward's family home in the Isle of Wight to soak some of it up" (A Serious Character 218). In a letter to Dorothy Shakespear, dated September 23, 1913, Pound exclaims that "Upward seems to know things that aint in Frazer, at least he talked sense about sun worship and the siege of Troy" (Letters of Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear 259). Additionally, in another letter to Dorothy, dated October 2, 1913, Pound writes that Upward "is a rare phenomenon. He has just finished The Divine Mystery, digested golden bough with a lot more of his own intelligence stuck into it" (Letters of Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear 264). Pound reviewed The Divine Mystery for The New Freewoman Review,<sup>16</sup> and praised the book "as the most fascinating . . . on folk-

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<sup>15</sup>Pound's "Psychology and Troubadours" appeared, by what seems to be Mead's request, in The Quest's forth volume, October 1912. In a 1911 letter to his mother, Pound states that "I have spent the P.M with G.R.S. Mead. Editr. of 'The Quest' who wants me to throw a lecture for his society which he can afterwards print. 'Troubadour Psychology,' whatever the dooce that is" (qtd. in Tryphonopoulos, The Celestial Tradition 82).

<sup>16</sup>"The New Freewoman: An Individual Review". An organ for the feminist cause founded by Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver in June 1913. Pound, on August 15, became a collaborator in "The New Freewoman", undertaking its literary section. Between 15 October and 15 November 1913, Pound published "The Serious Artist", and on 15 November a review of Upward's The Divine Mystery.



lore that I have ever opened. I can scarcely call it a book on 'folk-lore', it is a consummation. It is a history of the development of human intelligence" (Selected Prose 373). Pound's enthusiastic acceptance of Upward's The Divine Mystery is important because it reveals his responsive attitude to fin de siècle ideas that we have already mentioned. The Divine Mystery is indeed a compendium of esoteric thought in which Upward presents the development of religion as the development of human consciousness itself, that is, the development of the divine will itself or of "the forces of intelligence" (Selected Prose 374), as Pound remarks, which struggle to bring to light the divine element in human beings. Furthermore, Upward exemplifies in The Divine Mystery the idea of cyclic revolution, that is, of the precession of the equinoxes,<sup>17</sup> as well as the idea of the Great Goddess, ideas which Pound incorporates in his works, particularly The Cantos.

In addition to Upward's The Divine Mystery, Mead's The Doctrine of the Subtle Body is another esoteric work which influenced Pound and introduced him, as Tryphonopoulos suggests, "to the history of [the] Gnostic allegory of the soul (The Celestial Tradition 87). The Doctrine of the Subtle Body is similar to The Divine Mystery because, in a sense, it relates the subtle body to Upward's idea of the son of man or Gnostic Christ, that is, to the immortal human principle which unites the finite human being with the infinite, "a ladder of ascent from the earth to the light world" (Mead, The Doctrine of the Subtle Body 9). This process of illumination or "the soul-freeing doctrine of regeneration" (Mead, The Doctrine of the Subtle Body 15) is for

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<sup>17</sup>Pound, in his review on The Divine Mystery, refers to the theory of the precession and comments that Upward "has related prophesy to astrology, and has shown the new eras to be related to the ascent of the successive signs of the zodiac in which the sun appears, changing his mansion about once in each eight centuries" (Selected Prose 374). That the vernal equinox takes "eight centuries" to change mansion, is obviously Pound's mistake or misunderstanding. Upward makes it clear that a cyclic revolution takes about two-thousand years to be completed. In his "The New Age" article, Upward points out that "two-thousand years ago the sun, or rather the vernal equinox, migrated from the Sign of the Lamb into that of the Fish. Today it is passing, or has passed, from the Fish to the Waterman" (qtd. in The Divine Mystery 356).

Mead the secret of the alchemical process, which is also described by Mead as the "theurgical process of regeneration, or the bringing to birth of man's perfected subtle body . . . [a] process of inner transmutation and heightening of consciousness" (The Doctrine of the Subtle Body 31). As we will demonstrate, Pound describes this alchemical process in The Cantos, and attempts (whether consciously or not), to accomplish the Great Work and proclaim a new divinity. Through the assimilation of the opposites, Pound escapes from the darkness of the material world and proceeds to the light world of the new, internal, divine state of consciousness.

In addition to Mead's Quest Society, another attraction for new age thinkers was Orage's weekly, left-wing review, The New Age,<sup>18</sup> subtitled "An Independent Socialistic Review of Politics, Literature and Art". Upward, who was a regular contributor to The New Age, describes the review as "the only existing organ in which any independent criticism is permitted" (qtd. in The Divine Mystery 362). Pound, after his introduction<sup>19</sup> to Orage in 1911, became a regular contributor to The New Age; one of his most important essays published there is "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" (30 November to 22 February 1912).

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<sup>18</sup>Orage and Holbrook Jackson started The New Age on May 2, 1907, in order to promote a particular vision of socialism "in which all employers would be abolished together with all 'unemployed', either rich or poor, so that the state itself might become as a single industrial syndicate, obedient to the policy imposed by parliament, which would be a policy of universal economic benevolence" (Mairer, A.R. Orage :A Memoir 41). Furthermore, Orage reveals in "The Future of the New Age" that the purpose of The New Age was to assist, in a way, Pound's "forces of intelligence" (Selected Prose 374), to manifest and elevate human consciousness to a higher level. Orage states in his essay: "Believing that the darling object and purpose of the universal will of life is the creation of a race of supremely and progressively intelligent beings, THE NEW AGE will devote itself to the serious endeavour to co-operate with the purposes of life, and to enlist in that noble service the help of serious students of the new contemplative and imaginative order" (qtd. in Thatcher 228).

<sup>19</sup>Robert Schultz suggests that it was probably Hulme who introduced Pound to Orage (A Detailed Chronology of Ezra Pound's London Years 461), while Tryphonopoulos argues that it was probably F.S. Flint (The Celestial Tradition 79).



Among the circle of Orage, the name of Aleister Crowley was not unknown. Beatrice Hastings,<sup>20</sup> the sub-editor of The New Age and Orage's intimate friend for six years, indicates that Orage, and his literary circle knew of Crowley and his works. Even though Pound and Crowley were both new age thinkers, sharing, more or less, the same revolutionary ideas, and faithful servants to the spirit of the new age, it seems that Crowley's sinister reputation deterred the two poets from meeting each other. Nevertheless, even though they never met, they were aware of each other's existence, and it seems that there are some traces of Crowley's influence in Pound's work. Crowley, in his autobiography, comparing American and English poetry, does not give an enthusiastic picture of Pound. Crowley points out that "in Europe, outside negligible cliques in Soho, buzzing round people like Ezra Pound and even smaller patches of pretence in Paris, poets have some sense of dignity" (The Confessions 737). Peter Russell testifies that in a discussion he had with Pound, Russell mentioned Crowley's name "in connection with Yeats, [but Pound] was in quite a hurry to say 'I never read anything by him'" (294). Perhaps Pound, in his hurried reply to Russell, wanted to conceal that he had once dabbled in the works of "the wickedest man in the

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<sup>20</sup>Hastings, who is also known for her Defence of Madame Blavatsky (1937), in The Old 'New Age': Orage-and Others (1936), reveals, in a vindictive manner though, Orage's connection with Crowley; Hastings claims that she had once found in Orage's room "a collection of works on sorcery. Up to this time, Orage's intimate friend was not Mr. Holbrook Jackson, who thought he was, but Mr. Aleister Crowley" (19). Furthermore, Hastings testifies that "Orage published a long review [by Dr. Eder] of one of Mr. Crowley's works [Konx Om Pax], describing him in the terms belonging to Masters and concluding: 'Will he [Crowley] excite that life-long animosity that is accorded only to the most dangerous thinkers?'" (19). Orage, a Nietzschean, more than likely knew of Crowley, who also "saw himself as Nietzsche's true heir" (Colin Wilson, The Nature of the Beast 87), and who had adapted his life to Nietzsche's philosophy. Mairer, in his biography of Orage, quotes Orage remarking often in his lectures: "'Do what you will' . . . 'and you will find out how little you can will. Till you have courage to take your own way, you can't know what it is'" (A.R. Orage: A Memoir 26-27). Orage's statement is, of course, Nietzschean in origin, but it might also reflect Crowley's Law of Thelema, that is Crowley's "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law . . . thou hast no right but to do thy will" (The Book of the Law 23).

world". Stock, in his biography of Pound, quotes Pound's reply to Eastman concerning "the regimentation being the essence of Fascism": "Fascism only regiments those who can't do anything without it. If a man knows how to do anything, it's the essence of Fascism to leave him alone" (The Life of Ezra Pound 364). Pound's reply to Eastman is strongly reminiscent of Crowley's philosophy about the True Will of the individual, the idea that "a man who is doing his True Will has the inertia of the Universe to assist him" (Crowley, Magick in Theory and Practice xv).

Yeats's role in educating Pound to the arcane tradition cannot be underestimated. Pound, even before his arrival in London, regarded Yeats with great respect, considering him, as he states in a letter to William Carlos William, dated May 21, 1909, "the greatest living poet" (The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 7). Furthermore, in a 1910 letter to his mother, Izabel Pound, Pound remarked, after meeting Yeats for the first time, that Yeats "is the only living man whose work has anything more than most temporary interest" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 80). Yeats was not only an excellent craftsman in poetry, but also an authority on the esoteric tradition, with more than twenty-five years experience in the strange world of ceremonial magic. At the time Pound arrived in London in 1908, Yeats had already achieved the degree of Adeptus Minor in the Rosicrucian society of Stella Matutina.

There was a mutual intellectual attraction between Pound and Yeats; both poets, during the course of their friendship, helped<sup>21</sup> each other explore further their poetic inspirations. Pound became a regular visitor to Yeats's "Monday Evenings",<sup>22</sup> where occult subjects were discussed frequently. In addition to these "Monday

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<sup>21</sup>On Pound and Yeats's collaboration in poetry, see Richard Ellmann's chapter on Pound in Eminent Domain, Patricia Hutchins's Ezra Pound's Kensington, as well as James Longenbach's Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism.

<sup>22</sup>"Monday Evenings" took place at Yeats's apartment in London at 18 Woburn Building. See also Pound's reference in canto LXXXII.



Evenings", Pound spent most of the winters of 1913-14, 1914-15, 1915-16 with Yeats at 'Stone Cottage',<sup>23</sup> where Pound's initiation into the esoteric tradition was completed.

It is a standard belief<sup>24</sup> among Pound scholars that Pound was not very enthusiastic about practical occultism. There is evidence, however, which suggests that Pound was not indifferent to or ignorant of the practical aspect of occultism.<sup>25</sup> Stock indicates that Pound, even before his extensive exposure to the occult by Yeats, expressed some interest in astrology (The Life of Ezra Pound 81). Indeed, in a letter to his mother, dated February 19, 1910, Pound inquired of his mother the exact hour of his birth, expressing his belief in "planetary influences" and his desire to "indulge in private experiment and investigation" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 82). Prior to his first visit to Stone Cottage, and in anticipation of the occult discussions that he would conduct there with Yeats, Pound, in a letter to his mother, dated November 1913, expresses caution and reserve: "My stay in Stone Cottage will not be in the least profitable. I detest the country. Yeats will amuse me part of the time and bore me to death with psychical research, the rest. I regard the visit as a duty to posterity" (Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 25). However, his days at Stone Cottage were not as boring as Pound anticipated. As Pound's letters to Dorothy Shakespear, and Yeats's correspondence to Lady Gregory indicate, Yeats and Pound, during the long Sussex winters, had discussions which proved constructive to both poets. On January 3, 1913, Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory that Pound helped him "to get back to the definite and concrete, away from modern abstractions. To talk over a poem with

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<sup>23</sup>At Coleman's Hatch, near the Prelude, in the Ashdown Forest, Sussex, "where they were looked after by two sisters, the Misses Wellfare" (Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 145). Ellmann indicates that "Yeats wished to be away from London with a secretary who could do some typing and also read to him Douguty's poems and . . . Icelandic sagas" (69).

<sup>24</sup>This belief is also supported by the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that Pound was a member of an organized secret society.

<sup>25</sup>Certainly Pound was more interested in the theoretical aspect of the esoteric tradition than in theurgy. However, in addition to the purely theoretical aspect of occultism, Pound's knowledge of theurgy, that is, of practical magic, helped him to crystallize his metaphysical religious ideas.

him is like getting you to put a sentence into dialect. All becomes clear and natural" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 130). In his letters to Dorothy, Pound indicates that he and Yeats contemplated and studied the history of the esoteric tradition, and experimented with some aspects of practical occultism. In a letter to Dorothy, dated January 6, 1914, Pound comments that he and Yeats "have been reading The Comte de Gabalis<sup>26</sup>--a charming and spritely book about sylphes and Salamanders"; he even urges Dorothy to "read it when the Eagle [Yeats] lends it to O.S. [Olivia Shakespear]" (Letters of Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear 293). In a subsequent letter to Dorothy, dated January 14, 1914, Pound counsels Dorothy to commence her occult education by reading first "Comte de Gabalis . . . then you might try the Grimoir of Pope Honourous (IIIrd I think). . . . Ennemoser's History of Magic may have something in it" (302). Additionally, in an early letter to Dorothy, Pound exemplifies some of the theurgical techniques that he was taught by Yeats, particularly the technique which concerns the foundations of theurgy, that is, the training of the imagination to sustain a mental image, a necessary and initial step in the education of the neophyte in any magical system. Pound describes to Dorothy the technique of the "visualization of points": "Fix a point, colour it, or light it as you like, start it moving, multiply it, etc. Make patterns, colours, pictures, whatever you like. You will end as a great magician and prize exorcist" (276). The technique of the "visualization of points" that Pound describes in his letter to Dorothy, is practised by all serious aspirants in magic to enable them to proceed to the more important technique of the "assumption of the god forms", one that Pound knew of and hinted at In Religio or The Child's Guide to Knowledge. The technique of the "assumption of the God forms" is crucial because it enables the magician to unite his/her "individual consciousness during life with the greater being of the universal Essences, the more embracing consciousness of the gods

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<sup>26</sup>La Comte de Gabalis (1670), by Abbe de Montfaucon de Villars. It consists of five treatises on the Rosicrucian philosophy. Crowley found this book "valuable for its hints of those things which it mocks" (Magick in Theory and Practice 212).



who are the everlasting sources of light, life and love" (Regardie, The Tree of Life 58). The occult belief in the gods cannot, of course, be taken literally. Regardie explicitly points out in The Tree of Life that "the conventional form of the God thus summarizes in a most astounding way a vast aggregation of ideas, legends and myths, epitomizing at the same time special forces of nature, or, it may be, unconscious powers in the spiritual make-up of man" (173). Regardie's belief in god as a particular state of consciousness reflects Pound's conviction, expressed in "Religio", in god as "an eternal state of mind" (Selected Prose 47). Pound's belief<sup>27</sup> in polytheism can only be understood in its occult context; specifically, Pound's belief that a human being can be transformed into a god "when he enters one of these states of mind" (47), that is, when he/she identifies himself/herself with the particular knowledge, trait, or consciousness that each god represents, reflects the occult practical technique of the "assumption of the god forms", a technique which Pound indirectly refers to in "Religio" where he says that "it is better to perceive a god by form, or by the sense of knowledge, and, after perceiving him thus, to consider his name or to 'think what god it may be'" (Selected Prose 48).

Yeats's esoteric influence on Pound at Stone Cottage can be considered an initiation in the literal sense of the word; according to Regardie, an initiation is "the beginning of a new phase or attitude to life, the entry, moreover, into an entirely new type of existence. Its characteristic is the opening of the mind to an awareness of other levels of consciousness both within and without. Initiation means above all spiritual growth" (The Golden Dawn 23). Thus, initiation, or the closing of the eyes to an old state of consciousness and their opening to another higher level of consciousness, is what happened to Pound at Stone Cottage. Tryphonopoulos, in The Celestial Tradition, comments that "Pound's usual stance [concerning the occult mysteries and practical occultism] is that of an interested and informed outsider who never became a

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<sup>27</sup>To T.S. Eliot's question about Pound's religious beliefs, Pound responds categorically that "the Gods exist" (Guide to Kulchur 299).

member of any of the occult groups which proliferated in Edwardian London. . . . Pound did not see himself, nor was he seen by them as 'belonging'" (70). Even though there is no evidence that Pound belonged to a particular occult society, as Yeats and Crowley did, still Pound was obsessed with the occult, and seriously Pound regarded himself as an initiate to the arcane mysteries, a fact which Tryphonopoulos underestimates. In a letter to Henry Hope Shakespear, dated February 16, 1914, written while Pound was at Stone Cottage, Pound, in order to explain to his future father-in-law his objections to conventional marriage, declares himself a man who has "some religion" and who counts himself "much more a priest than I do some sceptic who is merely being paid for public pretence of something he has probably never considered" (Letters of Ezra Pound to Dorothy Shakespear 307). Furthermore, that Pound considered himself a serious member of the secret society or brotherhood of Eleusis and not just a mere sympathizer, is also reflected in The Cantos. In "Canto 90", Pound, referring to the element of Eleusis, that is, to the conspiracy of intelligence, of which Jaques de Molay was also a member (as Pound points out in the canto), rhetorically asks, "Was Erigena Ours?" (639). Pound's reticence concerning the occult mysteries, his insistence on the ineffability of these mysteries, and his conviction that the revelation of these mysteries to the profane constitutes a sacrilege, demonstrate further Pound's serious attitude towards the occult and also indicate that Pound may have been initiated by Yeats at Stone Cottage. In a letter to Henry Swabey, dated October 31, 1939, Pound declares that "the mysteries are not revealed, and no guide book to them has been or will be written" (Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 327). In a subsequent letter to Douglas McPherson, dated November 3, 1939, Pound insists that "the minute you proclaim that the mysteries exist *at all* you have got to recognize that 95% of yr. contemporaries will not and can not understand one word of what you are driving at. And you can *not* explain. The SECRETUM stays shut to the vulgo" (Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 328-29). Furthermore, in Guide to Kulchur, Pound distinguishes himself from the profane, and like a true initiate



proclaims, that the mysteries are "not to be spoken save in secret. The mysteries [are] self-defended, the mysteries that *can* not be revealed. Fools can only profane them. The dull can neither penetrate the secretum nor divulge it to others" (145).

### **Pound and the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition**

Surette, in The Birth of Modernism, points out that "the theosophical circles of Kensington in which Pound moved from 1909 until about 1920" believed in "the theosophical story of an ineffable wisdom surviving from great antiquity" (123). Pound was proselytized to this occult theory of an ancient wisdom transmitted through the centuries; however, the nature of this wisdom still evades Pound scholars. In the first chapter we presented the theory that this ineffable wisdom corresponds to the chthonic esoteric tradition, that is, to the tradition which embodies the mysteries and beliefs of the cult of the Great Goddess, a cult which, despite persecution by the ensuing patriarchal religions, survived through the centuries mostly underground and occasionally under the guise of several secret societies. In contrast to the chthonic esoteric tradition, the solar esoteric tradition, being a fraction of the former body, retained the esoteric and mystical nature of the mother body, but adopted its mysteries and ceremonies to the patriarchal demands of the dominant, external patriarchal religion.

When Pound, in his work, refers to the mysteries of Eleusis or Amor, or to the conspiracy of intelligence, or to the tradition of the undivided light, he speaks of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and not of the solar tradition, whose adherents act in full conformity with the principles of patriarchal Christianity. Pound was aware of this distinction in the esoteric tradition; in Guide to Kulchur, he argues that "secret history is at least twofold" (264), while in "Terra Italika", he alludes to the "difference between the Mithraic 'evil' and the light of Eleusis" (Selected Prose 55).

Pound's reference to Mithraism and the light of Eleusis is indicative of his knowledge of the nature of the solar and chthonic esoteric traditions. In the first

chapter we identified the solar esoteric tradition with Mithraism, that is, with the pre-Christian patriarchal cult par-excellence, whose rituals and creation myths were adapted by Christianity. We have also demonstrated that Mithraism was a development of the original cult of the Goddess or cult of Eleusis, which was not a "local religion" (27), as Stock argues in Poet in Exile, but a powerful religion which dominated the entire ancient European world.

Pound was aware<sup>28</sup> that patriarchal Catholic Christianity had inherited the theories and dogmas of the early patriarchal creeds, particularly those of Mithraism, a notion amply demonstrated by Reitzenstein and Massey; he was also aware of the esoteric conviction that Christianity had failed to incorporate in its dogmas the esoteric wisdom of the mother cult of the Great Goddess, and that Christianity had failed to comprehend the esoteric meanings employed in the symbolism of the ceremonies it had adapted from earlier cults. In "Terra Italika", Pound declares that "the Mithraic cult entered Rome with a paraphernalia still found almost intact in developed Xtian theology. 'Christianity' entered Rome about 100 years later. This 'Christianity' took on most of the worst characteristics of Mithraism and appears to have lost a good many of its supposedly original own" (Selected Prose 56). Moreover, in "Terra Italika", Pound stresses the esoteric belief (both chthonic and solar) that institutionalized Christianity failed to comprehend and therefore incorporate in its dogmas the esotericism of the ancient mysteries. Pound asserts in "Terra Italika" that "either by coincidence or causation the ancient wisdom seems to have disappeared when the mysteries entered the vain space of Christian theological discussion. . . . The Church was no longer interested in theology, it no longer believed or even knew what it [its esoteric symbolism] meant" (Selected Prose 57). In other words, Pound says that the esoteric mysteries of the Goddess were no longer espoused and practised by patriarchal

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<sup>28</sup>Pound was probably introduced to this theory by Josephin Peladan, whose books--Origine et Esthetique de la Tragedie and Le Secret des Troubadours--Pound reviewed in 1906.



Christianity, and that their suppression was probably due to a conspiracy which rejected the idea of unity of being, that is, the idea of the Gnostic Christ or Son of the Divine Anthropos. Pound, hinting at this conspiracy, asks in "A Visiting Card", "Who destroyed the mystery of fecundity, bringing in the cult of sterility? . . . Who decided to destroy the mysteries within the Church so as to be able to destroy the Church itself by schism? Who has wiped the consciousness of the greatest mystery out of the mind of Europe?" (Selected Prose 287). By "greatest mystery" of the European mind Pound means the ancient European cult of the Great Goddess, which forms in his thought part of the conspiracy, the objective of which is the reinstatement of the "consciousness of the greatest mystery" in the world's religious thought, that is, the reinstatement of the female principle and the unity it represents in the human consciousness.

With the predominance of the patriarchal creeds, the unity symbolized by the Mother Goddess was disrupted, but not, however, extinguished altogether. Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, states that "alongside or rather a long way from alongside of factual history, for 2000 or more years has run the celestial tradition, the caeruleum coelum, the augustum coelum, etc." (222). In ABC of Reading, Pound hints at the existence of the chthonic esoteric tradition, stating that it consists of "a whole body of knowledge, fine subtle . . . lain in the secret mind of Europe . . . far too complicated to deal with in a primer of reading" (qtd. in Carpenter 513). In "Terra Italika", Pound more explicitly states that "it is equally discernable (sic) upon study that some non-Christian and inextinguishable source of beauty persisted throughout the Middle Ages maintaining song in Provence, maintaining the grace of Kalenda Maya. And this force was the strongest counter force to the cult of Atys and asceticism" (Selected Prose 58). Pound believed that the "song in Provence", that is, troubadour poetry, on which Pound considered himself an authority, was inspired by the chthonic esoteric tradition or cult of Eleusis. In "Terra Italika", Pound argues that "the cult of Eleusis will explain not only general phenomena but particular beauties in Arnaut Daniel or in Guido Cavalcanti" (59), and in Guide to Kulchur, Pound states that "civilisation [which

Pound equates with the conspiracy of intelligence, that is, the chthonic esoteric tradition] had been in Italy. It had hung on in Provence and the Exarchate after Romulus Augustulus. A conspiracy of intelligence outlasted the hash of the political map. Avicenna, Scotus Erigena in Provence, Grosseteste in Lincoln, the Sorbonne, fat faced Frankie Petrarch, Gemisto, the splendour of the XVth century" (263).

Troubadour poetry, though, was directly linked to the Albigensian heresy, a heresy akin to the chthonic esoteric tradition and inextricably connected to the element of Eros. James J. Wilhelm, in Pound and the Troubadours: Medieval and Modern Rebels, states that the troubadours "brought a sense of Eros or Amor back to a Europe that had languished too long in the arms of a mystical caritas, in which the Supernatural had suppressed the natural" (115). Carpenter, in his biography of Pound, points out that Pound believed that the songs of the troubadours were not "just vague expressions of romantic feelings, but allusions to a specific 'love code' or 'love cult' which [Pound] asserts was descended from 'pagan rites of May Day' and owed much to the Eleusinian Mysteries of ancient Greece" (167). Furthermore, Carpenter asserts that Pound "by 1912 . . . had formulated a doctrine of sex as a Mystery or secret cult that revealed great truths to its enlightened practitioners. He was moving towards this idea--derived from the French Rosicrucian book<sup>29</sup> on the troubadour 'secrets' he had reviewed in 1906--during his first two years in London" (136). In "Terra Italika", Pound relates the element of sexuality to paganism, that is, to the chthonic esoteric tradition, and emphasizes that the latter "not only did not disdain the erotic factor in its

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<sup>29</sup>Carpenter alludes to Peladan's Le Secret des Troubadours, which Pound reviewed for the September 1906 issue of the Book News Monthly, under the title "Interesting French Publications". Peladan, in Le Secret des Troubadours, identifies the troubadours with the Albigenses, and believes, as Pound comments in his review, in the existence of a "mystic extra-church philosophy or religion, practised by the Albigenses, and the cause of the Church's crusade against them" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 31), a belief which Pound heartily adapted a few years later. Surette, in A Light from Eleusis, asserts that "Peladan planted a seed in [Pound's] mind over which he obviously mulled for many years until it took on the aspect of a belief, not only in the existence of an underground mystery cult, but also in the truth of that cult's doctrine in a form which he had himself reconstituted" (37).



religious institutions but celebrated and exalted it, precisely because it encountered in it the marvellous vital principle infused by invisible Divinity into manifest nature" (55). Thus, from a philosophical point of view, the element of Eros constitutes for Pound the divine will itself, which strives for actualization by urging humanity towards creativity; it also involves for Pound "a sublimation of sexuality into something more refined and intellectual" (Carpenter 167). From an esoteric point of view, though, the erotic factor is, indeed, according to occultism, a stairway to heaven and illumination, since it can be utilized by initiates to achieve an altered state of consciousness, which would subsequently lead to unity of being. Pound was certainly aware of the practical, occult treatment of the erotic, a theme which Pound alludes to often in The Cantos. Pound, in "Terra Italika", hints that "for certain people<sup>30</sup> the pecten cteis is the gate of wisdom" (56); in "Religio", he cryptically asserts that "paganism included a certain attitude toward; [sic] a certain understanding of, coitus, which is the mysterium" (Selected Prose 70). In "canto 36", Pound exclaims "sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu" (96), that is, "sacred, sacred is the illumination that the sexual intercourse brings" (translation mine); and in "Psychology and Troubadours", Pound notes that "sex is . . . of a double function and purpose, reproductive and educational . . . [that] we should consider carefully the history of the various cults or religions of orgy and of ecstasy, from the simpler Bacchanalia to the more complicated rites of Isis or Dionysus" (The Spirit of Romance 94-95).

The element of Eros, because of its essence, is inextricably linked to the chthonic esoteric tradition, which is identified with the cult of the Great Goddess. Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, reveals his awareness of the unity of being which is represented by the chthonic esoteric tradition, declaring that "Eleusis did not distort truth by exaggerating the individual, neither could it have violated the individual

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<sup>30</sup>Pound refers to occultists who deal with sexual magic or Tantra, or the left hand path of magic. It would not be farfetched to conjecture that Pound probably had Crowley in mind.

spirit" (299). Pound believed, however, that the other end of the conspiracy, the principle of evil itself, sought to destroy that unity, symbolized by the Goddess. Pound, in "A Visiting Card", refers to two forces<sup>31</sup> which, in his opinion, dominate the historical stage and are responsible for the world's secret history or conspiracy; he asserts that "one [force] divides, shatters, and kills, and one . . . contemplates the unity of the mystery. . . . There is the force that falsifies, the force that destroys every clearly delineated symbol, dragging man into a maze of abstract arguments, destroying not one but every religion. But the images of the gods, or Byzantine mosaics, move the soul to contemplation and preserve the tradition of the undivided light" (Selected Prose 276-77).

Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves wanted to maintain the tradition of the undivided light, and, accordingly, declared war against the force which ran counter to their poetic sensitivities and aspirations. In other words, they turned against the force which opposes the individual spirit and artistic imagination, and which generates scientific materialism by cultivating the gross materialistic spirit of the ignorant bourgeoisie, suppressing the aristocratic, creative, artistic spirit of the few. Pound, echoing Yeats and Crowley's indignation about the suppression of individuality in the West, complains that

the imbecility of America from 1900 onward, was loss of all sense of borderline between public and private affairs. English law in our time has been supremely immoral. It has made crime. Its divorce laws are an infamy, the king's proctor an obscenity. . . . Naturally the Prohibition amendment in the U.S. was the fine flower of legal bestiality, a record so far as publicity went, but in real degradation not lower or viler than less advertised British statutes. The British have a talent for servility, sycophancy, bootlicking, we Americans for irrelevance, simple imbecility and insouciant in consequence. (Guide to Kulchur 186)

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<sup>31</sup>In Yeats's terminology, Pound's two forces correspond to the primary and antithetical principle. The antithetical principle stands for the artistic imagination and unity of the Goddess, while the primary is the force that "falsifies", and stands for abstract thought and reasoning.



Moreover, Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, commenting on the conflict between the state and the individual, criticizes the way that the State forces the individual in modern society towards other-directedness<sup>32</sup> and uniformity. Pound asserts that even though "the state exists for the individual . . . in our time the individual who does not deem his own acts and thought in certain ways and degrees up and down as to their use to the state (that is the universitas, the congeries of humans grouped in the state) is an inferior individual" (190). Pound, in "Provincialism the Enemy",<sup>33</sup> defends the individual spirit and will and remarks that "the contest for 'rights', democracy, etc., in the West, has been little concerned with personality" (Selected Prose 164), and suggests wittily that Christ should have "dictated to His disciples some such texts as 'Thou shalt not save thy neighbour's soul by any patent panacea or cultur. And especially thou shalt not save it against his will'" (Selected Prose 164).

This destructive, primary, patriarchal force which promotes the spirit of uniformity and opposes artistic imagination and human creativity, is called by Pound "usura". Pound characterizes usura as "contra naturam" (Guide to Kulchur 281), that is, "against nature", a force which is evil itself because it turns against the divine will which Pound identifies with artistic spirit and creativity. The advocates of this evil

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<sup>32</sup>A term coined by David Reisman in his work The Lonely Crowd. Colin Wilson, summarizing Reisman's argument concerning the other-directed type of human being, notes that "the other-directed man cares more for what the neighbours think than for what he wants in his own person; in fact, his wants eventually become synonymous with what the neighbours think. Reisman believes that American character is slowly changing from inner-directed to other-directed. The other-directed man demands security, and all his desires and ambitions are oriented towards society" (The Stature of Man 7). If we apply Reisman's terminology to Pound, then unquestionably Pound is an inner-directed type of man, a type "with pioneer qualities; [who] in an expanding and changing society he can cope with the confusion because he possesses the self-discipline to drive towards a goal he has himself chosen" (Wilson, The Stature of Man 7).

<sup>33</sup>Pound defines "Provincialism" as "an ignorance of the manners, customs and nature of people living outside one's own village, parish, or nation, [and as] a desire to coerce others into uniformity" (Selected Prose 159).

force have conspired through the centuries to extinguish any remaining trace of the chthonic esoteric tradition or cult of Eleusis, and to establish a monetary status quo, which would enable them to control the world governments and consequently the human will itself.

Surette, in A Light from Eleusis, observes accurately that "Usura is not simply usury, the economic sin of renting money at excessive rates, but is . . . evil itself . . . a materialization of evil in economic terms" (79). Hugh Kenner, in The Pound Era, states that "what Pound means by usura is the fact that the money is created as interest-bearing debt" (407), and Tryphonopoulos defines usura "as the cause of failure in every imaginable human activity: architecture, music, painting, crafts, agriculture, economics, sex, and religion" (The Celestial Tradition 144).

Emery, in Ideas into Action, claims that Pound believed that "the enemy [usura] was not a political party . . . nor a social class . . . nor a nation, . . . but a small powerfully knit group of manipulators who, in maintaining an economic system, used parties, classes, and nations (in part through their control of newspapers, publishers, and universities) for their personal aggrandizement" (47). However, the aim of this conspiracy is more complicated than the satisfaction of the personal whims of the conspirators; in Pound's opinion, the goal of this conspiracy was the enslavement of humanity itself, the establishment of an international tyranny, which would also have the power and the function of a religion. In other words, it would substitute for religion in the human consciousness, obliterating at the same time human initiative and creativity. Pound, in a March 30, 1943 broadcast, warns his listeners about the schemes of the conspirators. He explains that "the world was to be enslaved according to plan", and that the nature of this slavery "consists in having to do uninteresting work, at another's bidding. The modern means of getting a man to work are lack of money, his lack of money, and debt" (Ezra Pound Speaking 266). Pound believed that usura, in its attempt to enslave individual thought and creativity, and its counter force the element of Eleusis, were closely allied to patriarchal Christianity. In Guide to



Kulchur, Pound asserts that the "Church of England is mostly an ally of mammon"<sup>34</sup> (194-95), that is, of usura, and that

anything that profanes the mysteries or tends to obscure discrimination, goes hand in hand with drives toward money profit. . . . The whole of Protestant morals, intertwined with usury-tolerance, has for centuries tended to obscure perception of degrees, to debase the word moral to a single groove, to degrade all moral perception outside the relation of the sexes, and to vulgarize the sex relation itself. (281-82). \_

Moreover, Pound, in a 1941 broadcast, warns his audience about the demoralization of Christianity, and the alleged alliance between the Church of England and international usury. According to Pound,

today we are faced by a new INTERNATIONAL empire, a new tyranny, that hates and bleeds the whole world. I refer to the empire of international usury, that knows no faith and no frontiers. It is called international finance, and the Jew and the Archbishop in London are at work for that tyranny, trying to draft a universal religion in defence of the infamy of the usurers. (Ezra Pound Speaking 411-12)

Pound, in his April 18, 1943 broadcast, further exclaims that "the Church of England [is] praying that a denser form of atheism than its own shall descend and engulf us" (Ezra Pound Speaking 282).

This international conspiracy of some few, unknown, omnipotent capitalists, or of a "gang of extremely unpleasant monopolists" (Ezra Pound Speaking 263), as Pound labels them in his April 4, 1943 broadcast, constitutes a basic theme in the works of Barruel, Robison, Rossetti, and Webster.<sup>35</sup> This conspiracy theme, though, is

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<sup>34</sup>Robert Graves, as we will demonstrate in chapter four, believed like Pound that "mammon . . . exploits the discoveries of science for the benefit of international financiers, enabling them to amass more and more money and it is hoped eventually to control all markets and governments everywhere" ("What Has Gone Wrong?" 112).

<sup>35</sup>For more information about these four writers see the first chapter of the present thesis.

also revealed in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion; this document, whose authenticity is questionable, allegedly betrays a Jewish conspiracy willing to rule the world. Surette remarks in The Birth of Modernism that "the phony Protocols of Zion is an instance of the same sort of fantasy that Barruel had indulged in a century and a half earlier" (75). Carpenter points out that Pound, had read the Protocols around 1940, and had "by 1942 . . . completely accepted the 'truth' of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (A Serious Character 613). Indeed, Pound, in his April 20, 1943 broadcast, comments on the nature of the Protocols, recognizing that "they are a forgery", but quickly adding that they are, however, "the one proof we have of their authenticity" (Ezra Pound Speaking 283). Furthermore, in the same radio broadcast, Pound expresses caution and concern about the nature of this conspiracy and about the mysterious identity of the conspirators. Pound, reflecting on the mystery of the Protocols, notes that "in regard to the protocols either there is and was a plot to ruin all goyim, all nations of Europe, or some people are stark raving crazy. They want to go on to certain wreck. WHO are they? . . . Who are the lunatics? Was there a deliberate plot? That is what should concern you. WAS there a plot? How long had it been in existence? (Ezra Pound Speaking 284-85). The questions that Pound raises in his broadcasts are rhetorical, for he was absolutely sure that there was a plot which, in his opinion, had actually instigated the patriarchal primary period by suppressing the element of Eleusis or the chthonic esoteric tradition. Pound declares in Guide to Kulchur that "you have two millennia of history, wherein we see usury opposed to the arts, usury at the antipodes of melody, of melodic invention, of design. Usury always trying to supplant the arts and set up the luxury trades, to beat down design which costs nothing materially and which can come only from intelligence, and to set up richness as a criterion" (282).

Pound is reticent, though, about the role that particular secret societies performed in this complicated world wide conspiracy. Concerning the conspiracy of intelligence or conspiracy of the chthonic esoteric tradition, Pound does not refer to



any specific occult groups, preserving perhaps the secrecy of anything concerning the mysteries of Eleusis. When it comes, though, to the conspiracy of usura, Pound, in his radio broadcasts, hints at the role that Masonry<sup>36</sup> might have played in this conspiracy, considering the possibility, set forth earlier by Barruel, Robison, and Webster, that Masonry had become an organ of usura. Pound, in an April 30, 1942 broadcast, comments on Masonry and its alleged relation to usura and the British Intelligence Service, questioning its financial resources and who might be at the top of the pyramid. Pound exclaims that "no one in the United States will be more surprised at the talk of hook up between Masonry, its central control, Jewry, Anglo-Israel, and the British Intelligence Service (than will the rank and file of American Masons). . . . WHAT ARE THE MASONS? Where do they git [sic] their money? And WHO controls them? Who is the big SILENT voice at their center?" (114-15).

Pound was so obsessed with the theory of international conspiracy and so convinced of its authenticity, that he felt it was his responsibility to enlighten the people of Europe and America about its clandestine plans. Emery points out that "[Pound's] broadcasts . . . are almost altogether reiterations of what he had been saying in prose and poetry for two decades--that materialism, usurious practices, the habit of conformity, and economic illiteracy were throttling civilisation" (60). Pound, in his June 28, 1942 broadcast, once more identifies the enemy with "greed, avarice, usury, falsification incarnate in a group of unpleasant persons" (Ezra Pound Speaking 184), and declares his conviction that the "world could only be saved by a conspiracy of intelligent men" (Ezra Pound Speaking 185). Moreover, in Guide to Kulchur, Pound,

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<sup>36</sup>In the first chapter we suggested that Freemasonry reflects the solar esoteric tradition, that is, a tradition which retains an esoteric character, but which acknowledges, though, the patriarchal principles, conforming therefore to the principles of Christianity. We assume that if Pound is correct in his conjecture that Masonry supports the element of 'usura' in its schemes, then we conclude that Pound's 'usura' corresponds to what we have referred to in the first chapter as the 'Church Mythologists', that is, those who deliberately misinterpreted the esoteric teachings of Paul, separating Christianity from its esoteric origins.

reminiscing about a discussion he had with Yeats, writes that "I can see a time when we may all of us have to join together, that is everyone possessed of any degree of civilisation. We will have to join the Monsignori against Babbitt.<sup>37</sup> 'But CONfound it!' said the propagator of the Celtic Twilight, 'In my country the Church IS Babbitt' (155).

### The New Learning

Against the spirit of Babbitt or usura, Pound juxtaposed the spirit of artistic imagination. Pound, echoing the ideas of Yeats and Crowley, believed that the artist, because of his/her intuitive ability to feel the divine will, was the harbinger of divine consciousness itself, that is, an instrument of the cult of Eleusis or of chthonic esoteric tradition. According to Pound, the artist gives expression to this divine spirit in art. Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, states that with the help of the artistic spirit, humanity could escape from the mental inertia and conformity that the conspiracy of usura imposes in human consciousness:

the worship of the supreme intelligence of the universe is neither an inhuman nor bigoted action. Art is, religiously, an emphasis, a segregation of some component of that intelligence for the sake of making it more perceptible. The work of art (religiously) is a door or a lift permitting a man to enter or hoisting him mentally into, a zone of activity, and out of fogg and inertia (189-90).

More importantly, Pound considers the artist as the direct descendant of the ancient shaman or magician, an individual who has the responsibility and natural right to

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<sup>37</sup>In Pound's words Babbitt is "the state of mind which tolerates the existence of England and America as we have known those countries. It is the state of mind which can see without boiling, a circumjacence, that tolerates Mellon and Mellonism, the filth of american govt. through the reigns of Wilson, Harding, Coolidge and the supremely uncultivated, uneducated gross Hoover, the England that swelters through the same period and the France of that period, and every man who has held high office in these countries without LOATHING the concessions made to foetor and without lifting hand against them, and against the ignorance wherein such mental squalor is possible" (Guide to Kulchur 155-56).



become the leader<sup>38</sup> of humanity in the ensuing new age. Pound, expressing his belief in the aristocratic, magico-artistic spirit, and echoing Shelley and Nietzsche, declares that the modern artist

knows he is born to rule. . . . He must live by craft and violence. His gods are violent gods. A religion of fashion plates has little to say to him, and that little is nauseous. . . . The artist has been at peace with his oppressors for long enough. He has dabbled in democracy and he is now done with that folly. We turn back, we artists, to the powers of the air, to the djinns who were our allies aforetime, to the spirits of our ancestors. It is by them that we have ruled and shall rule, and by their connivance that we shall mount again into our hierarchy. The aristocracy of entail and of title has decayed, the aristocracy of commerce is decaying, the aristocracy of the arts is ready again for its service. Modern civilisation has bred a race with brains like those of rabbits and we who are the heirs of the witch-doctor and the voodoo, we artists who have been so long the despised are about to take over control. ("The New Sculpture", The Egoist 68)

Pound, acquainted with the theory of cyclic revolutions, agreed with Yeats and Crowley that civilisation was about to enter its antithetical phase. After "twenty centuries of stony sleep" (185), as Yeats exclaimed in "The Second Coming", a revival of the cult of the Goddess was fast-approaching to breath new life into the arts and reinstate the long suppressed artistic spirit to its rightful position. L.S. Dembo notes that "the justification for Pound's entire approach, as the justification for most of his theories, lies in the view that history is a chronicle of the achievement of an ideal kultur (or Paideuma) by the natural or good forces, and its corruption by the perverted or evil forces of the society" (The Confucian Odes of Ezra Pound 2). The "natural or good forces" had to triumph over the evil forces of usura for the new age to be established and civilisation to experience a renaissance, during which the differences between the sexes would be dissolved. Pound exclaims in Guide to Kulchur that

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<sup>38</sup>The idea of the artist as a magician leader also reflects Yeats and Crowley's convictions; it is also a belief that Graves adapts later in his works. See for instance Graves's utopian novel Seven Days in New Crete, where the poet-magicians are the natural leaders.

until the power of hell which is usura, which is the power of hogging the harvest, is broken, that is to say until clean economic conditions exist and the abundance is divided in just and adequate parts among all men, legal enforcements and interjections of the legal finger in relations between man and woman, will be deformation and evil, and no lawgiver will be able to cure the bone disease of society by bits of sticking plaster and paint. (156-57)

Furthermore, Pound expresses in Guide to Kulchur, his desire and anticipation for the new world order that the chthonic esoteric tradition would impose on the world. Pound writes, "Hell!! A New learning imposes itself! A new learning is necessary, is demanded by every one of the few hundred sufferers who have a respectable decent and clean curiosity" (151). Alfred Kazin, in "Homer to Mussolini: The Fascination and Terror of Ezra Pound", notes Pound's pagan affinity for the chthonic, antithetical spirit, and states that since "Pound was no Christian, poetry [for him] could still be primitive because 'the gods have never left us.' With this attitude he helped to establish modernism as a fascination with the archaic, the unconscious, its disdain for the mass, its view of industrial society as nothing but mechanization. He was spellbound by the vision of an earlier world" (32).

Enchanted by the vision of the chthonic esoteric tradition, Pound, like Yeats, became a pioneer in poetry. Deeply influenced by the revolutionary spirit of the new age, Pound became an apocalyptic writer, that is, a writer who undertook the mission of revealing and preparing for the coming of the new antithetical age. He believed like Yeats in the antithetical character of the new age, a character marked by imagination, intuition, simplicity, and individuality. Moreover, Pound believed that poetry in the new age should emphasize ideas rather than form, and that a poem should transmit, through an intuitive mental leap, its message to the reader, exciting the reader's imagination, and eliciting simultaneously ecstasy. T.S. Eliot, in his introduction to Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, notes that Pound "said much that was peculiarly pertinent to the needs of the time" (x); that "much of the permanence of Mr.



Pound's criticism is due simply to his having seen so clearly what needed to be said at a particular time . . . the value of which may not be immediately appreciated by later readers who lack the sense of historical situation" (xi); and finally that Pound is "more responsible for the XXth Century revolution in poetry than is any other individual" (xi).

Influenced by Pound's revolutionary spirit, T.S. Eliot, in "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry", expresses daringly the spirit of this modern revolution in poetry, as well as his adherence to the tradition of the undivided light. Eliot declares that "we [artists of the new age] do not imitate, we are changed; and our work is the work of a changed man; we have not borrowed, we have been quickened and we became bearers of a tradition" (The Egoist 39). Pound, in "Credo", summarizes his expectations about the new poetry that he wanted to introduce to the world. He declares that the new poetry will

move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be what Mr Hewlett calls 'nearer the bone'. It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretive power . . . will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer pointed adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither. (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 12)

In other words, Pound wanted to advance the idea that poetry should express "real" energetic life, and not only life experienced through books and reflections of past writers. Pound notes in "Credo" that "each age has its own abounding gifts yet only some ages transmute them into matter of duration. No good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old, for to write in such a manner shows conclusively that the writer thinks from books, convention and cliché, and not from life" (11). And yet, Pound insists that the poet has every right to return for inspiration to the exemplary poetic tradition manifested in the song of Provence, and associated with the element of Eleusis. Pound points out in "Credo" that a poet "feeling the divorce of life and his

art may naturally try to resurrect a forgotten mode if he finds in that mode some leaven, or if he think [sic] he sees in it some element lacking in contemporary art which might unite that art to its sustenance, life" (11). Moreover, Pound observes in "The Tradition" that "a return to origins invigorates because it is a return to nature and reason. The man who returns to origins does so because he wishes to behave in the eternally sensible manner. That is to say, naturally, reasonably, intuitively" (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 92). However, a human being, who lives reasonably and intuitively at the same time, is a "superman", as he has accomplished the Great Work, that is, assimilated the opposites and reached a divine state. According to Pound, artists have reached this divine state of consciousness, and can therefore become "'the antennae of the race'. . . the voltmeters and steam-gauges of that nation's intellectual life. They are the registering instruments, and if they falsify their reports there is no measure to the harm that they do" ("The Teacher's Mission", in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 58). Pound draws a distinction, though, between the serious and the bad artist. The serious artist, who accepts the antithetical spirit of the new age, is the artist philosopher (magician) who explores ideas concerning human nature, and the relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm, and who writes of these ideas with lucidity and clarity of expression, transmitting at the same time the emotional charge of these ideas to the reader. Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, notes that "the New Learning if it comes into being at all will get hold of ideas, in the sense that it will know where they 'weigh in'. It will take the man of ideas when he 'pulls his weight'" (44). In "The Serious Artist", Pound affirms that the artist of the new age must give free rein to his/her poetic creativity and intuition, and take into serious consideration the existential issue, that in order to write at all the artist "must have discovered something--either of life itself or of the means of expression" (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 56). The bad artist, according to Pound, disregards the existential question and the importance of ideas, and obscures his/her ideas with rhetoric in order to cover his/her ignorance or mislead the reader from the real issue. Pound, in "How to Read",



suggests "[throwing] out all [these] critics who use vague general terms. Not merely those who use vague terms because they are too ignorant to have a meaning; but the critics who use vague terms to *conceal* their meaning, and all critics who use terms so vaguely that the reader can think he agrees with them or assents to their statements when he doesn't" (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 37). Moreover, Pound, in "A Serious Artist", defines bad art as "inaccurate . . . art that makes false reports" (43). Pound associates this art with the primary period, and adds that the bad artist is, subsequently, one who usually conforms to the conventional standards and convictions of the antiquated primary period, and who refuses to accept the revolutionary seeds of the new antithetical age. The bad artist, in accordance with the standards of the primary age, disregards individuality, and falsifies or misleads the reader about important issues concerning human nature, ethics, and the relation between the human and the divine. According to Pound,

if an artist falsifies his reports as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect, as to the nature of his ideal of this, that or the other, of god, if god exists, of the life force, of the nature of good and evil, if good and evil exist, of the force with which he believes or disbelieves this, that or the other, of the degree in which he suffers or is made glad; if the artist falsifies his reports on these matters or on any other matter in order that he may conform to the taste of his time, to the proprieties of a sovereign, to the conveniences of a preconceived code of ethics, then that artist lies. (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 43-44)

Pound's views about the qualities which mark the serious poet, and hence the poetry of the new age, found expression in Imagism,<sup>39</sup> a school founded by Pound, Hilda Doolittle, and Richard Aldington in the spring of 1912. Pound makes it clear that the Imagistes do not convey absolutely new revolutionary ideas, but that, on the

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<sup>39</sup>For further information, concerning the poetic form that Pound and the Imagistes adopted, see chapter 5.

contrary, their ambition was to return to their origins, that is, to receive their inspiration from the tradition of the undivided light or chthonic esoteric tradition.

Imagism gave birth to the movement of Vorticism, inaugurated by Pound and Wyndham Lewis in 1914. The essence of Vorticism and Imagism is identical. Vorticism, however, was Pound's attempt to propagate<sup>40</sup> further the revolutionary spirit of the new age by disseminating the message and principles of Imagism to the other artistic disciplines. Pound, in Gaudier-Brzeska, commenting on Vorticism and its *raison d'être*, asserts that "we [Pound and his fellow Imagistes] wished a designation that would be equally applicable to a certain basis for all the arts" (81).

Pound, in his manifesto on Vorticism, published in the first issue of Blast, points out that "every conception, every emotion presents itself of the vivid consciousness in some primary form" (153). This primary form is what Pound calls the "Primary Pigment", which is extant in every artistic discipline. Pound affirms that the Vorticist should rely "on the primary pigment of his art, nothing else" (153). Regarding poetry, Pound asserts that its "primary pigment . . . is the image" (154). Furthermore, Pound associates the image with the vortex, stating that the vortex, like the image, is "the point of maximum energy" (153).

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<sup>40</sup>Vorticism was propagated by Blast, the "Review of the Great English Vortex", edited by Wyndham Lewis. Blast's first issue was published in London, in June 1914, and its last issue in July 1915. Blast prior to its publication was advertised in The Egoist, as the review which will mark 'the end of the Christian Era'. Lewis, celebrating the revolutionary artistic, solitary spirit, declares, in the first issue that "Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that would reach the public in no other way" (7), and that Blast "will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL. . . . Blast is created for this timeless, fundamental Artist that exists in everybody" (7). In Blast's last issue, Lewis maintained that he and his fellow vorticists were "not only the last men of an epoch. We are more than that. We are the first men of a future that has not materialized. We belong to a 'great age' that has not 'come off'". (qtd. in the intro. to Blast's first issue by Bradford Morrow vii). Pound, in the second and last issue of Blast, declares that "Blast alone has dared to show modernity its face in an honest glass . . . Blast alone dared to present the actual discords of modern 'civilization'" ("Chronicles" 85-86).



In addition to Imagism and Vorticism, Pound's ideogrammic method<sup>41</sup> is another means which guides the reader towards a comprehension of the new antithetical principles. Pound, in "A Visiting Card", declares that "if I have made any contribution to criticism I have done so by introducing the ideogrammic system" (Selected Prose 304). Carpenter, commenting on Pound's understanding of the ideogrammic method and stressing its antithetical attributes, states that it "consisted of doing away with abstract argument, or any other obviously rational process" (A Serious Character 273). Furthermore, Emery observes that Pound's poetic ideogrammic method "is a method altogether at a piece with Pound's general thinking, his prepossession for the hard, the definite, the precise; the obsessed specific object; the image as primary pigment; the individual's own experience, in religion; in ethics, the individual's gaze into the heart" (82).

We can safely assume that Imagism, Vorticism, and the ideogrammic method constituted a deliberate plan by Pound and his fellow revolutionary poets to discard the literary conventions of the primary period, and prepare poetry and the arts in general for the new learning or the new antithetical age. Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, referring to the learning of what he believed to be the previous primary cycle, argues that "a vast mass of school learning is DEAD. It is as deadly as corpse infection" (58); therefore, he declares that "the 'New Learning' can imply whatever men of my generation can offer our successors as means to the new comprehension" (58). Pound, by means of Imagism, Vorticism, and the ideogrammic method, wanted to make the reader see the difference between the imaginative, vigorous poetic method of the new antithetical age, and the imitative, abstruse, logical method of the old primary age. Furthermore, Pound wanted to make the reader "gaze into the heart", as Emery

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<sup>41</sup>A technique closely allied to the principles of Imagism, that Pound inspired from Fenollosa's essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry". According to Fenollosa, the ideogrammic method is the precise and to the point "method of poetry" and is opposed to the medieval or logical method which is "the method of abstraction, or of defining things in more and still more general terms" (qtd. in Pound, ABC of Reading 20).

intuitively points out, that is, to turn the reader's attention to the suppressed feminine principle or subconscious. Moreover, he wanted to lead the reader to a sudden insight or revelation or, as Tryphonopoulos asserts, "to help the reader arrive at the 'full Eidos'; . . . to give the reader 'a sudden insight'" (The Celestial Tradition 10). Indeed, Pound, in Guide to Kulchur, reveals that the purpose of his writing is to "cause the reader 'suddenly to see'" (51) from "a new angle" (51). "The newness of the angle," Pound notes, is "relative to the writer's aim . . . a just revelation irrespective of newness or oldness" (51). From an esoteric or magical point of view, "the newness of angle" is Pound's attempt to transport the reader, through a series of micro-shocks, to another mode of consciousness, to energize the reader's subtle body or body of light, to raise within the soul of the individual the Gnostic Christ, or in other words, to help the individual accomplish the Great Work.

So far we have discussed Pound's interest and involvement in the occult milieu of early twentieth century London; his belief in the commencement of a new antithetical age; and his belief in a sinister conspiracy, that of usura, which had deposed the ancient European religion of the Great Goddess or cult of Eleusis, and imposed on the Western world a patriarchal cult of "sterility", that is, institutionalized Christianity. This conspiracy, with Christianity as an ally, had as its purpose to strip the human consciousness of any trace of artistic sensibility, and enslave it in abstractions and dry reasoning. Pound shared the occult conviction that on the back stage of history, a secret and ruthless war was taking place between the evil forces of usura and the chthonic esoteric tradition, or what Pound called the conspiracy of intelligence, Eleusis, or the tradition of the undivided light. The conspiracy of intelligence represented for Pound the forces of those few who remained faithful to the mysteries of the Goddess, and who through the centuries kept the flame burning on the altar of the Mother Goddess, thus perpetuating the spirit of the chthonic esoteric tradition, which had as its ultimate purpose the reinstatement of the feminine, artistic principle in the human consciousness. Moreover, we have argued that Pound,



like Yeats, Crowley, and Graves, considered himself an apostle or prophet of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and as such, endeavoured to prepare the human consciousness to accept a new religious order that would include in its canon the chthonic esoteric philosophy and would reinstate artistic genius to its proper position. We have also indicated that Pound's endeavour to create a new poetic language which would reflect the philosophy of the new antithetical cycle gave birth to the movements of Imagism and Vorticism, and to the ideogrammic method. Pound believed that the new poetic language would enable humanity develop a new faculty<sup>42</sup> which would liberate human consciousness from its hylic fetters and reach divinity.

### **Pound's Early Poetry and the Nature God**

Before we examine Pound's The Cantos and attempt to elucidate its occult significance in relation to the chthonic esoteric tradition, we will examine some of Pound's earlier poetry, reveal its occult reference, and thus, establish a link between it and The Cantos, in order to prove that Pound's epic is not the loose product of an insane mind, but the culmination of Pound's lifelong interest in the occult. Pound once "described the period of his life from sixteen to twenty-four (1901-1909) as coloured by 'mysticism' and said that the poems written then showed he had received a 'mystic illumination' (shades of Kitty Heyman and her occult enthusiasm)" (Carpenter, A Serious Character 63). Indeed, Pound's early as well as later poetry reveals his metaphysical and esoteric concerns. Pound, in Gaudier-Brzeska, affirms that from the very beginning of his poetic career he was determined to turn inwards towards self understanding, that through poetry he sought self-initiation. Pound

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<sup>42</sup>Pound, in "Postscript to Natural Philosophy of Love", commenting on Remy de Gourmont's theory about the connection between sexual intercourse and cerebral activities, recognizes the need for humanity to develop a new faculty. According to Pound, humanity feels the need or "protean capacity to grow a new organ; what organ? Or new faculty; what faculty?" (Pavannes and Divagations 211). In the latter work, Pound also suggests that this new faculty, should provide a "clearer understanding . . . physical refreshment and rigour" (212).

declares that "in the 'search for oneself', in the search for 'sincere self-expression', one gropes, one finds some seeming verity. One says 'I am' this, that, or the other, and with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing. I began this search for the real in a book called Personae, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem" (Gaudier-Brzeska 85).

Pound, in his poem "On his Own Face in the Glass", expresses his desire for self-initiation. Pound's persona looks at the "strange face there in the glass!" (Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound i,34), and realizes the multiplicity and diversity of the personae that co-exist in one self, the "myriad/ That strive and play and pass,/ Jest, challenge, counterlie" (v-vii,35); it realizes that within the self co-exist two powers that compliment each other, the "ribald company . . . [and] saintly host" (ii,34), and asks to find the answer which constitutes the 'I', that is, the relation between the 'I', the Pound persona, and the elements which constitute it.

The persona, in "The Tree", realizes that in order to have access to his/her inner self, he/she has to silence his/her conscious mind; that like a "tree amid the wood" (i,35), he/she has to be silent and still in order to hear the sound of silence. Having heard the sound of silence, the persona discovers his/her own individuality and gains access to his/her inner self. As a result, the persona "many new things understood/ That were rank folly to [his/her] head before" (xi-xii,35). The theme of self-initiation and inner calm is repeated in "Paracelsus in Excelsis". The persona, having acknowledged the different aspects of its personality, that is, having assimilated the opposites, feels its inner unity, sloughs off its old state of consciousness, and achieves illumination:

The mist goes from the mirror and I see!  
Behold! the world of forms is swept beneath--  
Turmoil grown visible beneath our peace,  
And we, that are grown formless, rise above--  
Fluids intangible that have been men,  
We seem as statues round whose high-risen base  
Some overflowing river is run mad,



In us alone the element of calm! (vi-xiii,148)

In addition to the theme of self-initiation, Pound's early poetry is pagan in spirit. Pound embraces the chthonic esoteric tradition and rejects the old primary abstract poetic spirit. Pound, in "Pan is dead", laments the loss of the nature god and describes the subsequent sterility that fell upon the world:

Pan is dead. Great Pan is dead.  
Ah! bow your heads, ye maidens all,  
And weave ye him his coronal.

There is no summer in the leaves,  
And withered are the sedges;

. . . How should [death] show a reason,  
That he has taken our Lord away  
Upon such hollow season? (i-v,xi-xiii,196)

Pound's aversion to the old primary poetic language is expressed in "Revolt", in which Pound desires to "shake off the lethargy of this our time" (i,96). He invites people to 'take arms', accept the antithetical principles, and strive to bring forth the new age. Pound admonishes people not to be complacent just because the theory of cyclic revolutions in a sense preordains the coming of the new age, but to "be men that dream,/ Not cowards, dabblers, waiters/ For dead Time to reawaken and grant balm/ For ills unnamed" (xv-xviii,96). Moreover, Pound complains in "Revolt" of the loss of human initiative and imagination, and, in a Nietzschean manner, compels people to "be such dreams the world shall tremble at" (xx,97); he even proclaims that if people insist on their passivity and death in life, then it would be better for God to "grapple chaos and beget/ Some new titanic spawn to pile the hills and stir/ This earth again" (xxix-xxxi,97).

Having declared his revolt against the old primary poetic spirit, Pound, in "In Durance", is distressed about being in a hostile world dominated by the adherents of the old primary tradition. Even though the persona in "In Durance" is surrounded by

"friendly faces" (ii,86), it is still "homesick/ After [its] own kind that know, and feel/  
And have some breath for beauty and the arts" (xiv-xvi,86). It seems that the persona invokes the chthonic spirit, which lies hidden "in the shadows" (xviii,86) of the old patriarchal spirit, to rise and inspire other poetic souls with its magic:

Aye, I am wistful for my kin of the spirit  
And have none about me save in the shadows  
When come *they*, surging of power,  
. . . Well then, so call they, the swirlers out of the mist of my soul,  
They that come mewards bearing old magic.

But for all that, I am homesick after mine own kind  
And would kindred even as I am,  
Flesh-shrouded bearing the secret. (xvii-xix,xxii-xxvii,86)

In "The Return", Pound directly refers to the revelation of this secret. Yeats, in "A Packet for Ezra Pound", compares Pound's poem to his own attempts in A Vision to express and prophesize the coming of the new antithetical period. Yeats explains to Pound that he intends to discuss the theory of cyclic revolution in A Vision, and also observes that "though you [Pound] had announced in ["The Return"] some change of style, perhaps in book and picture it gives me better words than my own" (29). Pound, in Gaudier-Brzeska, declares that "The Return" represents an "objective reality and has a complicated sort of significance" (85). Carpenter, in his biography on Pound, proposes that the subject of "The Return" is probably "the pagan--presumably Greek--gods and their tenuous, uncertain relationship with the modern age" (A Serious Character 174). As we have already indicated, Pound had accepted the occult theory of cyclic revolution and considered the return of the old gods as a given, or as an "objective reality". Pound, echoing Yeats in A Vision, and "The Second Coming", urges and warns humanity to perceive the quickening and coming of the chthonic gods:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>"The Return", like Yeats's "The Second Coming" is not thoroughly explicit about the nature of these "'Wing'd-with-Awe,/ Inviolable./ Gods of the winged shoe!" (x-



See, they return; ah, see the tentative  
 Movements, and the slow feet,  
 The trouble in the pace and the uncertain  
 Wavering!  
 See, they return, one, and by one,  
 With fear, as half-awakened; (i-vi,198).

### **The Cantos and the Mysteries of the Goddess**

Daniel Cory, in "Ezra Pound: A Memoir", testifies that Pound was not happy with The Cantos and that he considered it a "botch". According to Cory, Pound confessed that he "knew too little about so many things . . . I picked out this and that thing that interested me, and then jumbled them into a bag. But that's not the way to make . . . a work of art" (Encounter 38). Pound scholars have divergent views of The Cantos. On the one hand, the work that Pound considered a botch has been received in a jubilant strain and taken very seriously by Pound's critics. Carpenter, in his biography of Pound, accepts Pound's low opinion of The Cantos, but argues nevertheless that "they do have unity and coherence, for they are autobiography" (A Serious Character 912). Surette acknowledges sympathetically the obscurity of Pound's epic and asserts in A Light from Eleusis that in The Cantos "there is a clear consistency of purpose from the earliest beginning of the poem to its last fragments" (21). Moreover, Terrell, in Ideas in Reaction, declares that "The Cantos is the greatest religious poem of all time" (13), an opinion shared by Emery in Ideas into Action; Emery argues that "since in Pound's opinion, a culture without a religious faith is impossible and since The Cantos represents a guide to culture, the work must be considered a religious poem" (110). On the other hand, though, there are critics who do not conceal their exasperation over the ambiguity and abstruseness of The Cantos. Graham Hough, in Image and Experience, refers to The Cantos as a "lunatic jumble of asyntactical English, tags of Latin, Greek, Italian, German and French, interspersed with Chinese ideograms which have neither auditory nor conceptual significance for  


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 xii,198). It seems that Pound like Yeats was puzzled and pensive as to what changes the chthonic gods would bring to humanity, and how the latter would react to them.

the Western reader" (qtd, in Cory, "Ezra Pound: A Memoir" 37). George Dekker, argues in Sailing After Knowledge that The Cantos lacks "any plot or formal scheme . . . with which every particular fits and contributes towards an ordered development" (139), that there is not in The Cantos "any predetermined pattern which extends from Canto I to, say, Canto LXXI" (139). Dekker acknowledges, however, the poetic beauty and significance of some individual canti, but he concludes overall that "the poem, as a poem, is a colossal failure" (202).

Pound, in "An Introduction to the Economic Nature of the United States", points out that his main concern in writing The Cantos was to reveal to the reader the process of mystical illumination, that is, to guide the reader from the darkness of "human error" and ignorance to the light of new understanding. Pound asserts that "for forty years [he has] schooled [himself] not to write an economic history of the U.S. or any other country, but to write an epic poem which begins 'In the Dark Forest' crosses the Purgatory of human error, and ends in the light" (Selected Prose 137). Yeats, in A Packet for Ezra Pound, reminiscing about a conversation he had with Pound at Rapallo concerning The Cantos around February 1928, claims that in Pound's opinion The Cantos have "no plot, no chronicle of events, no logical discourse, but two themes; the descent into Hades from Homer, a metamorphosis from Ovid, and mixed with these, medieval or modern characters" (A Vision 4). Similarly, Pound, in a 1927 letter to his father, outlines The Cantos's main scheme as: "A. Live man goes down into world of Dead. B. The 'repeat in history'. C. The 'magic moment' or moment of metamorphosis, bust thru from quotidien into divine or permanent world.'" (Selected Letters 210).

Pound's description of The Cantos's main scheme is a description of the aspirant's initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, that is, the mysteries of the Great Goddess. According to Baring and Cashford, "the purpose and meaning of the [Eleusinian] Mysteries was initiation into a vision" (377), that is, a vision experienced by the mystes at the moment of epopteia or theophany, which would communicate the



ineffable unity represented by the Goddess. In esoteric terms, Pound endeavoured in The Cantos to accomplish the Great Work, that is, to deal, on a microcosmic level, with his conflicting, scattered thoughts and feelings in order to achieve unity of being, and, on a macrocosmic level, to establish the nature of the relation between the human and the divine, in other words to reinstate the fragmented human consciousness to its original state of divine unity. The epic actually deals with the eternal conflict between the opposites: on the one hand, the evil forces of usura, embodied in the abstract and patriarchal, and on the other, the divine spirit itself, the element of Eleusis, embodied in the chthonic esoteric tradition, in the artistic, imaginative, intuitive poetic genius. These two forces struggle for supremacy within the human soul, a struggle which is also externalized in actual human history itself. Pound, in The Cantos, reveals that a way out of this conflict, a way that would lead to Yeats's the thirteenth cycle, lies in the ancient mysteries of the Goddess, and particularly in the "hieros gamos" or sacred marriage, which results in the birth of Iacchos or Dionysos, the sacred child or child of the mother alone. Pound, in The Cantos, commemorates the coming of the new antithetical age, but what is more, he introduces into the religious consciousness of the people, as Yeats in A Vision, and Crowley in The Book of the Law did, a new divinity which is represented by the child, that is, the new state of divine consciousness that the mystes develops after his initiation into the mysteries of the Goddess.

Surette is the first critic to acknowledge "the importance of the rites of Eleusis as a paradigm of the Cantos' action" (A Light from Eleusis vii). Surette, in A Light from Eleusis discusses Pound's occult background, and how Pound's economical and political views are related to his occult interpretation of history. Moreover, Surette interprets the episode, in The Cantos, of Odysseus' descent to the underworld as an act of initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, which includes a sacred marriage between Odysseus and the Goddess, culminating in the experience of supreme vision or illumination. Odysseus, unlike the warlike Achilles, becomes the paradigm of peace

and domestic life, as well as the epitome of the chthonic esoteric tradition, since he represents in Homer's epics, The Iliad and The Odyssey, the feminine, creative, resourceful, and individualistic spirit. Odysseus, who is always accompanied by Athena, the goddess of wisdom, on his journey home, that is, on his way toward self-understanding, becomes initiated into the mysteries of the Goddess in his symbolical descent to the underworld.

Pound commences his epic by citing part of a Latin translation<sup>44</sup> of Homer's *Nekuia*, that is, Odysseus's journey to the underworld:

Came we then to the bounds of deepest water,  
To the Kimmerian lands, and peopled cities  
Covered with close-webbed mist, unpierced ever  
With glitter of sun-rays  
Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven  
Swartest night stretched over wretched men there.  
The ocean flowing backward, came we then to the place  
Aforesaid by Circe. ("Canto I", 11-18)

Circe becomes the catalyst for Odysseus's initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries. She is the part of the Great Goddess that represents the instinctual forces of the subconscious that the hero has to acknowledge and understand the importance of in order to be able to descend safely to the underworld. By going to bed with Circe, that is, by recognising the importance of the instinctual sex-drive, Odysseus transforms ordinary and uninitiated sexual intercourse into a sacred contact which leads to the experience of a beatific vision or illumination. Pound, in "canto 39", which according to Terrell presents "a flashback to events that took place before the exodus dramatized in canto I" (A Companion, I: 161), exemplifies the crude, instinctual raw force of Eros, symbolized by Circe. In the domain of Circe, the divine act of procreation and of summoning the spirit has been reduced to a meaningless and habitual act:

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<sup>44</sup>Pound's primary source was Andrea Divus's Latin translation of Homer's Odyssey (1538).



Girls talked there of fucking, beasts talked there of eating,  
 All heavy with sleep, fucked girls and fat leopards,  
 Lions loggy with Circe's tisane,  
 Girls leery with Circe's tisane . . . (11-14)

It is Circe, however, who helps Odysseus cross the threshold of Hades and achieve illumination. In "canto 39", Circe tells Odysseus that in order to return home, he has to visit the underworld and seek counsel from Teiresias:

Áëë' áëëçí ÷ñç ðñùôîí îäîí ôäëåóáé, éáé éëåóéé  
 Åèò Áéäáî äîîîs éáé åðáéíçò Ðåñóåðîîåéçò'  
 Øð÷ç ÷ñçóîîåîîðò Èçååéî Òåéñåóéäî  
 Îåîéîs áëäî òîu ôå òñåíåò åîðåäîé ééóé'  
 Òù éáé ôåéååùéîé îîî ðîñå Ðåñóåðîîåé. <sup>45</sup> (37-41)

In "canto 47", Circe repeats her suggestion to Odysseus to take

the road to hell  
 And to the bower of Ceres' daughter Proserpine,  
 Through overhanging dark, to see Tiresias,  
 Eyeless that was, a shade, that is in hell  
 So full of knowing that the beefy men know less than he,  
 Ere thou come to thy road's end.  
 Knowledge the shade of a shade,  
 Yet must thou sail after knowledge  
 Knowing less than drugged beasts. (3-12)

The first canto ends with Odysseus<sup>46</sup> in the underworld listening to Teiresias's presage, and with the sudden appearance of the goddess Aphrodite who, "bearing the

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<sup>45</sup>"But first you must complete another journey, and come to the house of Hades and dread Persephone, to seek soothsaying of the Theban Teiresias, the blind seer, whose mind abides steadfast. To him even in death Persephone has granted reason" (Terrell, The Companion I: 161).

<sup>46</sup>At this point in the first canto, according to Kay Davis, "Pound is identified with Odysseus. When Tiresias appears he says: 'A second time? Why? man of ill star,' and Odysseus has become Pound" (20). Furthermore, Pound, in canto 82, in an invocation to the Great Goddess, which Terrell describes in A Companion, as "an intense lyrical evocation of the Dionysian-Ceres/Iis-Osiris metamorphosis theme of death and regeneration" (453), describes his own initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, the moment in which "the poet himself becomes the victim, Adonis or Attis, the couch mate of the goddess" (Surette, A Light from Eleusis 213). Pound, invoking the Great Goddess, exclaims in canto 82: "How drawn, O GEA TERRA,/ what draws as thou drawest/ till one sink into thee by an arm's width/ embracing thee. Drawest./ Wisdom

golden bough of Argicida" becomes, the psychopompos or escort that guides Odysseus out of the land of the dead. Pound's decision to present Aphrodite at this particular stage of his and Odysseus's initiation instead of Hermes, the traditional psychopompos, is quite accurate and appropriate, and reveals Pound's knowledge of the mythical esoteric tradition as well as his adherence to the chthonic esoteric tradition.

Aphrodite's appearance is the outcome of Odysseus's successful encounter with Circe, that is, Odysseus's recognition and acceptance of the instinctual sensual forces of his subconscious. According to Baring and Cashford, Aphrodite, "as an image arriving in the human heart . . . comes alive when the animal nature of humanity is experienced as divine" (351). Furthermore, since Pound's intention is to demonstrate in The Cantos the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, the assimilation of opposites, then Aphrodite is the most appropriate goddess for this end, for she embodies "the figure who, in the likeness of the original goddess, brings back together the separate forms of her creation" (Baring and Cashford 353). Moreover, Baring and Cashford add that Aphrodite, as the daughter of heaven and earth or heaven and sea, is "the figure who reconciles the earthly and the heavenly" (356), that is, the catalyst that brings together the human and the divine. In The Cantos, Aphrodite, as goddess of Eros, best exemplifies the hieros gamos or sacred marriage. According to Surette, "Aphrodite is the 'seen form' par excellence in the Cantos: she is the beatific vision toward which the poem moves" (A Light from Eleusis 74).

The beatific vision that Surette refers to comes with the sacred marriage, an event that Pound celebrates and revers in The Cantos. Pound, in "canto 47", gives a superb description<sup>47</sup> of the sacred marriage between Aphrodite and Adonis:<sup>48</sup>

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lies next thee,/ simply, past metaphor./ Where I lie let the thyme rise and basilicum/  
let the herbs rise in April abundant".

<sup>47</sup>Pound describes also the sacred marriage in the cantos 17 and 23. Tryphonopoulos, in The Celestial Tradition, discusses extensively the cantos 17 and 23 in their relation to the sacred marriage.



The light has entered the cave. Io! Io!  
 The light has gone down into the cave,  
 Splendour on splendour!  
 By prong have I entered these hills:  
 That the grass grow from my body,  
 That I hear the roots speaking together,  
 The air is new on my leaf,  
 The forked boughs shake with the wind.  
 Is Zephyrus more light on the bough, Apeliota  
 more light on the almond branch?  
 By this door have I entered the hill.  
 Falleth,  
 Adonis falleth.  
 Fruit cometh after. (79-92)

The "fruit that cometh after" the sacred marriage and the loss of Adonis is described by Pound in the "canto 17". In the "canto 17", Odysseus experiences metamorphosis,<sup>49</sup> that is, a transfiguration of his ordinary consciousness to a new divine state symbolized in the canto by the description of a paradisaal locus inhabited

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<sup>48</sup>According to Hellenic mythology, Adonis becomes a figure of dispute between Aphrodite and Persephone, who were both enamoured by his beauty. Zeus reconciled the two goddesses by allowing Adonis to spend six months with Persephone in the underworld and six months with Aphrodite. According to Baring and Cashford, "the living marriage celebrated in the imagination of Classical Greece was between Aphrodite and Adonis" (362). Furthermore, Baring and Cashford associate Adonis with the Great Goddess's son-lover, who has to be sacrificed in order for the new form to arise: "Adonis, as the god of vegetation and the corn, and of all visible, growing and dying life, must suffer his particular death that the life of the whole may continue, just like Osiris and Attis (also killed by a boar in some stories). Here the boar embodies the male aspect of the great mother as the fertile pig--like Isis and Demeter, for instance--where she sacrifices the lover that he may be reborn as the son. . . . The son-lover must accept death--as the image of incarnate being that falls back, like the seed, into the source--while the goddess, here the continuous principle of life, endures to bring forth new forms from the inexhaustible store" (363).

<sup>49</sup>The theme of metamorphosis appears also in canto 2, in which Dionysus, the fruit of the sacred marriage, plays the lead role. William Cookson points out that "canto II expresses the 'moment of metamorphosis, bust through from quotidien (everyday) into divine or permanent world'. . . . The rhythms take on an electric energy so that the power of the god [Dionysus] seems to be materially present in the words. Dionysus (Zagreus) is one of the central dieties of the Cantos and in a sense his presence is felt in all the animals . . . plants, and trees that shine throughout the poem, making its cosmos living and nouminous" (A Guide to The Cantos of Ezra Pound 6).

by gods. Prominent among the gods who appear in this paradisiacal state are Dionysus, Aphrodite, and Artemis. Dionysus appears at the very beginning of "canto 17":

So that the vines burst from my fingers  
 And the bees weighted with pollen  
 Move heavily in the vine-shoots: chirr--chirr--chir--rikk--a purring  
 sound,  
 And the birds sleepily in the branches.  
 ZAGREUS! IO ZAGREUS !  
 With the first pale-clear of the heaven  
 And the cities set in their hills,  
 And the goddess<sup>50</sup> of the fair knees  
 Moving there, with the oak-woods behind her,  
 The green slope, with white hounds  
 leaping about her;  
 . . . Between them,  
 Cave of Nerea,  
 She like a great shell curved,  
 And the boat drawn without sound,  
 Without odour of ship-work,  
 Not bird-cry, nor any noise of wave moving,  
 Nor splash of porpoise, nor any noise of wave moving.

Tryphonopoulos points out that "the Dionysian metamorphosis of "canto 17"'s opening line . . . is the outward sign of epopteia and captures the exact moment of the 'bust into the permanent world' of the gods" (109). Pound's reference to Dionysus (Iacchos, or Zagreus) at the beginning of his "paradiso terrestre" (Notes for CANTO CXVII 32) or "canto 17", is intentional and in full accordance with the Eleusinian Mysteries. Pound, in "canto 17", does not refer to Dionysus as simply the god of wine, but also as "the mystical child at the breast, the image of perpetual renewal, and

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<sup>50</sup>Pound refers to Artemis, the goddess of wild animals, whose connection with the Mysteries of the Goddess is indisputable. Kerenyi insists that Artemis is another aspect of the archetypal core or maiden, that "the original Artemis and the original Demeter prove . . . to be very closely related, indeed in their pristine state (the mythological idea of the Primordial maiden) to be identical" ("Kore" 136).



the sign that the Eleusinian and the Eleusinian Mysteries had come together" (Baring and Cashford 379).

At the last stage of the Eleusinian mysteries and right after the sacred marriage, at the moment of epopteia, that is, when the goddess appears in a burst of light, the hierophant exclaims that "the great goddess has borne a sacred child: Brimo has borne Brimos!" (qtd. in Kerenyi, "Kore", Essays on a Science of Mythology 143). Kerenyi, in "Kore", identifies Brimo with Demeter and Persephone (143). Baring and Cashford add that at the moment of epopteia "the two goddesses have become one and, symbolically at least, it is this momentous union that 'gives birth' to the new vision that is the child" (385). The new vision that the child (Dionysus or Zagreus) represents is the divine state of consciousness that the initiate feels after the sacred marriage. This new vision is, for Pound, the new divinity that he desires and hopes will permeate the new antithetical age. This child, like Yeats's child of the mother alone and Crowley's crowned and conquering child, is the epitome of the chthonic esoteric tradition and embodies the unity which the Great Goddess represents. According to Baring and Cashford, the child is "the fruit of the regenerative powers of nature and the consequence of the uniting of the upper and lower worlds" (385). In other words, symbolically speaking, the child becomes the catalyst which induces the assimilation of the opposites in the human soul or the accomplishment of the Great Work. As Baring and Cashford state, "when mother and maid are seen to be one, then birth and rebirth become phases from a common source, and duality is, in that perception, transcended" (384). Furthermore, as Jung notes, "the 'child' paves the way for a future change of personality. In the individuation process, it anticipates the figure that comes from the synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. It is therefore a symbol which unites the opposites" ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype" 83).

Pound's interest in the chthonic esoteric tradition reaches its climax in the Pisan Cantos. Surette points out that in the Pisan Cantos "Aphrodite draws all the

goddesses to herself. She becomes Dea, the Goddess, and it is her theophany that is celebrated at Eleusis" (A Light from Eleusis 48). In the "Pisan Cantos", Pound overtly declares himself an heir to the chthonic esoteric tradition, expresses his desire to institute a utopian city governed by the antithetical spirit, and reveals his mission to proclaim to the world the religious message of the Eleusinian Mysteries. He conceives himself as a Christ-like figure or martyr whose religious message, though, does not include an actual paradise or some other objective reality, but a subjective state of mind<sup>51</sup> or psychic experience, which culminates in a state of unity embodied in the image of the Great Goddess. Pound repeats in the Pisan Cantos more than once that "le Paradis n'est pas artificiel" ("Canto 74"). Pound declares in "canto 74" his dedication to the chthonic spirit, and evokes Aphrodite, whom Pound associates with the Mother Goddess, to regain her place on her pedestal at Terracina:

I surrender neither the empire nor the temples plural [his belief in  
paganism]  
nor the constitution nor yet the city of Dioce  
each one in his god's name  
as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her  
and from her manner of walking as had Anchises  
till the shrine be again white with marble  
till the stone eyes look again seaward  
The wind is part of the process  
The rain is part of the process  
and the Pleiades set in her mirror  
. . . ÷ëííéá ããá, Ìçôçñ, [Chthonic Earth Mother]  
. . . I don't know how humanity stands it  
with a painted paradise at the end of it  
without a painted paradise at the end of it  
the dwarf morning-glory twines round the grass blade  
magna NOX animae with Barabbas and 2 thieves beside me.

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<sup>51</sup>Pound points out in canto 116 that the state of paradise that he refers to is not an objective reality that one can "walk on", but a subjective state which one can only "see".



Pound, in "canto 116", reveals his association with the chthonic esoteric tradition, and hints at his supposed mission to illuminate or initiate<sup>52</sup> the reader into the mysteries of the goddess. Moreover, Pound expresses in "canto 116" his doubts about the reader's ability to penetrate the fragmentary surface of his epic and perceive its message, as well as his own disappointment in not being able to present his message in a more coherent form:

To make Cosmos--  
 To achieve the possible--  
 Muss., wrecked for an error,  
 But the record  
 the palimpsest--  
 a little light in great darkness--  
 . . . I have brought the great ball of crystal;  
 who can lift it?  
 Can you enter the great acorn of light?  
 . . . Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.  
 And I am not a demigod,  
 I cannot make it cohere.

Moreover, Pound, in his notes for "canto 117", reveals once more his aspiration to transform the earth into a paradise by reinstating the worship of the archetypal mystical child, venerated in the Eleusinian mysteries of the Goddess; furthermore, he expresses his disappointment in and bitterness for having failed to do so:

To make a church

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<sup>52</sup>The idea that The Cantos enacts an initiation for the reader has been explored mainly by Davis and Tryphonopoulos. Davis, in Fugue and Fresko: Structures in Pound's Cantos, suggests that "the poem's didacticism is rooted in this participation by the reader. . . . Obscurity or confusion on the page can seduce the reader into a search for enlightenment, so that a good book can become 'a ball of light in one's hand' [Guide to Kulchur 55]. It can become a revelation, an epiphany, a guide through darkness" (26). Tryphonopoulos, in The Celestial Tradition, declares that "the reader of The Cantos is intended to undergo a confusion, disorientation, and catechesis of the initiand; in doing so, it is hoped that he will arrive at a revelation and be transformed from a participant in the mysteries (mystes) to an epoptes, one who 'has seen' or experienced the ineffable secret. The act of reading the poem is meant, thus, to constitute the initiation" (103).

or an altar to Zagreus  
 Son of Semele  
 . . . That I lost my center fighting the world.  
 The dreams clash and are shattered--  
 and that I tried to make a paradiso terrestre.

Pound believed that the mission of the chthonic esoteric tradition was to create a terrestrial paradise, a mission undertaken by a number of individuals, among them Pound himself. These individuals strive throughout history to kindle and communicate the Eleusinian message of unity of being to the world, that is, to change the religious status quo and reinstate the religion of the Great Goddess. Inevitably, the light-bearers, in their attempt to liberate the world from the primary patriarchal spirit, confront the element of usura, the patriarchal force which sustains, according to Pound, the present corrupt religious and political system. Terrell, in Ideas in Reaction, asserts that The Cantos

presents many such (archetypal) heroes in moments of action, as they attempt to lead their people to some measure of light: some are statesmen, others artists and poets: S. Malatesta and Dante and a few of the Medicis of Italy; J. Adams, T.J. Hudson, A. Jackson and Martin Van Buren of the U.S. These heroes confront a gang of bad guys who have one thing in common: a concern only with amassing wealth and treasure at the expense of others and gaining power over others: Pope Pious II, the Borgias, Alexander Hamilton, Nicholas Biddle, J.P. Morgan are high on a long list. . . . These are the children of darkness. (29)

Emery, in Ideas into Action, recognises the theme of conspiracy which permeates Pound's epic, and claims that "a primary purpose of the Cantos is precisely to break down existing historical concepts and to tease or brow beat the reader into investigating for himself significant documents which Pound thinks have been falsified or concealed for partisan reasons by professional historians. His criticism of the syllogistic method of reasoning applies to the writing of history" (25).

As we have already argued, Pound was thoroughly convinced about the plausibility of the theme of secret history. Those whom Pound presents in The Cantos



as adherents to the element of Eleusis or chthonic esoteric tradition have had to confront throughout history the element of usura, that is, the patriarchal forces responsible for the suppression of the mysteries of the Goddess. The element of usura, by degrading the arts and promoting abstract reasoning, and by directing humanity's inner need or craving for religious faith to the sterile worship of Mammon, conspired against human initiative and imagination, interfered with the development of human consciousness, and compelled humanity to conform to rules designed by usurers for their own personal aggrandizement. Furthermore, Pound believed that the element of usura, which embodied the principle of evil<sup>53</sup> itself, turned against the divine spirit,<sup>54</sup> identified in The Cantos (and in Pound's philosophy in general) with the element of Eleusis.

Pound believed that since the esoteric function of Eros was to summon the Divine Spirit, and since the divine spirit was the enemy of usura, then, logically, the element of usura would attack and degrade the divine spirit to such a degree that it would be transformed into a sinful basic instinct. In the May-June 1920 issue of The Little Review, in an article on W.H. Hudson, Pound vehemently attacks the element of usura, accusing it of collaborating with a rotten, sold-out political system and a sterile creed, in order to suppress human individuality and free thought: "A bloated

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<sup>53</sup>Pound, in the addendum for canto 100, using harsh language, identifies the element of usura with absolute evil, which opposes the principle of good associated with beauty and the Great Goddess: "The Evil is Usury, neschek/ the serpent/ neschek whose name is known, the defiler,/ beyond race and against race/ . . . Here is the core of evil . . . / Passing the doors of temples, defiling the Grove of Paphos,/ neschek, the crawling evil,/ slime, the corrupter of all things,/ Poisoner of the fount, of all fountains, neschek,/ The serpent, evil against Nature's increase,/ Against beauty/ Ôï êáëíí [the good]" (Drafts and Fragments of Cantos CX-CXVII 28)

<sup>54</sup>Pound, in canto 98, states that "deus est anima mundi", that is, he identifies the divine spirit with the human consciousness or collective unconscious. The idea that in The Cantos, divinity evolves through human consciousness has been explored in Terrell's Ideas in Reaction. Terrell equates Theos with the cult of Amor or Eleusis, and argues that the former uses human consciousness for its evolution. According to Terrell, "the Divine Spirit is maturing and evolving in the minds and hearts of the people" (105).

usury, a cowardly and snivelling politics, a disgusting financial system, the sadistic curse of Christianity work together, not only that an hundred species of wild fowl and beast shall give way before the advance of industry, i.e. that the plains be covered with uniform and venomous sheep, bleating in perfect social monotony" (qtd. in Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound 230-31). Pound, in "canto 45", reveals to the reader the unnatural and anti-artistic qualities of usura, as well as its readiness to degrade the divine aspect of the element of Eros:

With usura, sin against nature,  
 . . . Usura rusteth the chisel  
 It rusteth the craft and the craftsman  
 It gnaweth the thread in the loom  
 None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;  
 . . . Usura slayeth the child in the womb  
 It stayeth the young man's courting  
 It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth  
 between the young bride and her bridegroom  
 CONTRA NATURAM  
 They have brought whores for Eleusis  
 Corpses are set to banquet  
 at behest of usura.

Furthermore, Pound believed that the usurers, in their obsession to monopolize the world, were not only "obstructors of knowledge" ("canto 14"), but also warmongers who "create debts, . . . scarcity, so that they can extort the interest on these debts, so that this can raise the price of money . . . completely indifferent to the human victim, to the accumulated treasure of civilization to the cultural heritage" (Pound, Money Pamphlets, qtd. in Emery, Ideas into Action 8). Pound, in "canto 18", lashes out against the hypocrisy and greed of munitions dealers:

'Peace! Pieyce!!' said Mr. Giddings,  
 'Uni-ver-sal? Not while yew got tew billions ov money,'  
 Said Mr. Giddings, 'invested in the man-u-facture  
 'Of war machinery.



Pound, at the end of "canto 46", presents the inevitable dire effects of this absurd devotion to the element of usura on American and European society, that is, unemployment, illiteracy, crime, and poor working conditions:

FIVE million youths without jobs  
 FOUR million adult illiterates  
 15 million 'vocational misfits', that is with small chance for jobs  
 NINE million persons annual, injured in preventable industrial accidents  
 One hundred thousand violent crimes. The Eunited States ov America  
 3rd year of the reign of F. Roosevelt, signed F. Delano, his uncle.  
 CASE for the prosecution. That is one case, minor case  
 in the series/Eunited States of America, a.d. 1935  
 England a worse case, France under a foetor of regents.

Pound believed that a new age was fast approaching, and that it was his duty to contribute to the revolutionary surge of this new antithetical age. Pound became the champion of the new antithetical spirit and an enemy of the old primary one, which Pound considered stagnant and dangerous to the development of human consciousness and civilization. Mead, in The Gnosis of the Mind, foreseeing the coming of the new age as well as its chthonic character, declares that "I too await the dawn of the New Age, but I doubt that the Gnosis of the New Age will be new . . . the very essence of the Gnosis is the faith that man can transcend the limits of the duality that makes him man, and become a consciously divine being" (qtd. in Surette, The Birth of Modernism 135). Mead's statement summarizes accurately Pound's argument in The Cantos. Surette and Tryphonopoulos agree that Pound's epic is a work which proclaims the coming of the new age; Tryphonopoulos asserts that "The Cantos are intended as an epic of the New Age, an argument that privileges the poem's mythos because it most clearly expresses the esoteric sense which provides the poem with such coherence as it has" (The Celestial Tradition 102).

Even though Surette, in his pioneering work A Light from Eleusis, acknowledges and proves the importance of the Eleusinian Mysteries to The Cantos, still he underestimates the impact that the mysteries of the Goddess had on Pound's

religious metaphysics. Surette confesses in A Light from Eleusis that "it is only necessary to understand that Pound sees himself to be returning to the psychic and historical well-head of religion in the adoption of Eleusis as his 'faith'. It is a faith which does not require the 'bluff based upon ignorance' of dogma, and asks only that one believe in the primacy of felt experience, and the testimony of extraordinary (or mystic, if you will) experience" (223). And yet, Surette insists that "Eleusis has no moral teaching, no theology, no cosmology, and no eschatology. It is thought to be, as practised at Athens, a survival of the most primitive religious sensibility" (221). It seems that Surette, as well as the majority of Pound scholars, lends to the cult of Eleusis a local character, and does not connect it with the ancient religion of the Mother Goddess which dominated the ancient European world for thousands of years. Thus, even though Surette accepts that The Cantos propagates the coming of the new age, he does not accept their religious character in relation to the religion of the Great Goddess, a "European religion" which Pound glorifies in The Cantos, and yearns for in "Statues of Gods", a religion which consists of the "pre-Christian element which Christianity has not stamped out" (Selected Prose 71), and which Pound wants to revive to the modern world. Terrell, in Ideas in Reaction, recognizes the religious character of The Cantos, as well as Pound's intention to accomplish with the epic the Great Work, and transmit a new religious message to the world. Terrell asserts that "Pound followed what in the sunset of our century has come to be called 'the holistic path': all facets of the universe and man's relation to it must be seen as one integrated process. So it was with all the founders of the great religions from the beginning. The magic world of Pythagoras led to Plato to the Neoplatonists who carried on the tradition" (169). However, Terrell, unlike Surette, does not accept that Pound adapted the religion of Eleusis as his own religion, stating that "such a conclusion is both misleading and destructive" (Ideas in Reaction 127). Stock, in The Life of Ezra Pound, commenting on Pound's religious beliefs, asserts that Pound was on the side of a matriarchal religion and against patriarchy. According to Stock, Pound maintained



that "true religion . . . was from agriculture, the Hebrew religion on the other hand, with its deity who was a shark and a monopolist, was the religion of the 'butchers of lesser cattle'" (397). Stock argues that Pound saw "Christianity [as] composed of 'many mixed elements' and that the 'valid elements' were European. The only vigorous feasts of the church, he [Pound] maintained, were grafted onto European roots, having to do with the sun, the grain, the harvest, and Aphrodite" (370).

The Cantos is certainly Pound's par-excellence work which celebrates and propagates the spirit of the new age. Moreover, like Yeats's A Vision, and Crowley's The Book of the Law, Pound's epic, as a manifesto of the chthonic esoteric tradition, attempts--admittedly in a somewhat obscure way--to expose the deleterious effects of the old primary period on human civilization and mind, as well as proclaim the religious message of the ancient European religion of the Great Goddess, that is, to declare the birth of the new divinity or child of the mother alone.<sup>55</sup> Pound's new divinity, that is, the child born at the moment of epopteia at the Eleusinian Mysteries of the Goddess, is quite similar to Yeats's new divinity or child of the mother alone, which he declares in A Vision, and Crowley's Horus or crowned and conquering child, which he proclaims in The Book of the Law. As we will demonstrate in the next chapter, Graves's literary work is permeated with the same revolutionary antithetical spirit and is inspired entirely by the Mysteries of the Great Goddess.

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<sup>55</sup>The child of the mother alone reflects the Gnostic idea of the son of the Divine Anthropos, or Son of Man. It also reflects Mead's idea of the "subtle body", whose connection with Pound's belief in a higher state of consciousness is examined by Tryphonopoulos in A Celestial Tradition, and particularly on his discussion on Pound's canti 90 and 91. Furthermore, the child of the mother alone reflects the enigmatic secret of Freemasonry which refers to the Widow's son. In a sense, the Widow is Aprodite, or the Mother Goddess lamenting for her son-lover Adonis. The son might be the human being, the orphan devoid of its divinity.

## Chapter 4

### Robert Graves and the New Age

#### Introduction

In 1969, Colin Wilson visited Robert Graves in order to ask the poet a series of questions concerning the Occult. Graves startled Wilson with his statement that "occult powers are not so rare. One person in every twenty possesses them in some form" (qtd. in Wilson, The Occult 63). Graves, in "The White Goddess: A Talk for the Y.M.H.A", a lecture delivered in New York on February 9, 1957, declares that he is not a practising occultist, and that he belongs to "no religious cult, no secret society, no philosophical sect" (Steps 90); he asserts, however, that he does not underestimate his faculty of intuition, which he trusts and values "up to the point where it can be factually checked" (Steps 90). Graves's poetic intuition enabled him to catch a glimpse of the paranormal and experience an exalted state of consciousness, which Graves describes best in his autobiographical short story "The Abominable Mr. Gunn". Graves, in this story, describes how "one summer evening . . . I received a sudden celestial illumination: it occurred to me that I knew everything. . . . I did know everything . . . held the key of truth in my hand and could use it to open any lock of any door. . . . I now realize that what overcame me that evening was a sudden infantile awareness of the power of intuition, the supralogic that cuts out all routine processes of thought and leaps straight from problem to answer" (91-92).

Graves's knowledge of the esoteric tradition is staggering, despite the fact that he was not a member of any secret society or occult group. Graves, an expert in Greek, Jewish, and Irish mythology, as well as a serious student of the history of religion, shares Yeats, Crowley, and Pound's belief in the theme of secret history.



After the suppression of the matriarchy by the patriarchal creeds, the chthonic esoteric tradition, that is, the tradition which remained faithful to the esoteric mysteries of the Goddess, survived through the centuries to reinstate the religion of the Goddess in the religious consciousness of people.

The struggle of the chthonic esoteric tradition against the patriarchal spirit can be discerned in human history. According to Graves, in ancient Greece, the patriarchal Olympian religion was not taken seriously, that "almost everyone mocked at it in private" (Difficult Questions, Easy Answers, "Bible in Europe" 50), and that even Homer, the national poet of the ancient Greeks, was an adherent to the Mysteries of the Great Goddess, "a member of a secret mystery religion which had survived from matriarchal times, with seats at Eleusis, at Corinth, on the island of Samothrace and elsewhere" ("Bible in Europe" 50). Even after the powerful emergence of Christianity, the strongest of the patriarchal creeds, the chthonic esoteric tradition managed to survive under the guise of several secret societies. Graves believes that in the early Christian European world, the cult of the Goddess was disseminated from a Saracene Sufic society to the Order of the Knights Templars; the Templars then communicated the secret, heretical knowledge to the Albigenses and Troubadours, and were also responsible for the rise of Freemasonry.

Furthermore, Graves shares Pound's belief that early Christianity had access to the esoteric tradition of the mysteries of the Goddess, and that it had appropriated the rituals and esoteric beliefs of the original cult of the Mother Goddess, adapting them to the new solar principles. The ties, however, with the original esoteric source were cut by the Church mythologists, who suppressed the solar esoteric teachings of the early Church and inaugurated, according to Graves, the cult of Mammon. Graves's belief in the cult of Mammon corresponds to Pound's belief in the conspiracy of usura. Graves, echoing Pound, asserts in "What Has Gone Wrong?" that "Mammon . . . exploits the discoveries of science for the benefit of international financiers, enabling them to amass more and more money and it is hoped eventually to control all markets

and governments everywhere" (Difficult Questions, Easy Answers 112). In other words, Graves insists that an existing conspiracy of international profiteers is responsible for persecuting the chthonic esoteric tradition as well as extinguishing at the same time the esoteric flame in patriarchal Christianity. In Oxford Addresses on Poetry, Graves, in his first lecture, using a metaphor from Greek mythology, demonstrates to his audience his conviction of the existence of the conspiracy of Mammon, the insufficiency of patriarchal Christianity to fulfil its religious obligations, and the role that the cult of the Great Goddess is destined to play in the future era. According to Graves, "Apollo, the god of science having formed a palace conspiracy with his half brother Hermes, god of politics, and his uncle Plutos, god of money, has emasculated Almighty Zeus. . . . Zeus still remains propped on his throne, but a Regency Council of Three has taken over his powers" (12). Moreover, in "What Has Gone Wrong?", Graves adds that the gods who usurped the place of Zeus are

no longer friendly or noble gods but the scum of Olympos: namely the pseudo-Hermes, god of secret diplomacy, the pseudo-Apollo, god of uncontrolled science and technology, the pseudo-Ares or Mars, god of the secret police and the khaki-Mafia, and Plousios, the shameless god of wealth who does nothing to distribute the food-surplus--though he was the son of the Barley Goddess Demeter by Iasion (healer) and begotten in a ploughed field--among the peoples of the world. The Christian God, whom this junta of divine conspirators is now displacing, and on whom hungry millions call in vain, cannot defend himself by an appeal to women. This is because as Zeus he had earned Hera's undying hatred and because as Jehovah he had concealed his marriage with the Goddess Ashera with whom he originally shared Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem. Men are lost without the magical and protective love of women; and both sexes lose power unless they can take recourse to manual crafts and constant companionship. (Difficult Questions, Easy Answers 116)

Graves, familiar with the theory of eternal recurrence, believed, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, that the dawn of a new age was at hand; that two-thousand years of patriarchal, primary occupation were giving way to the fast-approaching antithetical cycle that would bring back the cult of the Mother Goddess. For Graves,



the religion of the Goddess is the only remedy to the anarchy of the present era or transitive period. If humanity insists on reacting against the rising antithetical spirit and clinging on to old patriarchal values, then, Graves believed, the catastrophe of humanity would be imminent. Graves, in Oxford Addresses on Poetry, emphasizes the peril that the present situation holds for humanity, since the conspiracy of Mammon has managed to "cut civilization loose from its moorings: familiar coasts of orthodox religion, philosophy and economics fade in the dusky distance. Crazy new cults are preached, old ones revived; ghosts supposedly laid centuries ago creep out of their graves, not only at dusk but by broad daylight. And the ancient sovereign Goddess who has been waiting these last three thousand years to return with power, observes her opportunity" (12).

The Muse poets who, according to Graves, are the natural heirs of the chthonic esoteric tradition, and who in The White Goddess, Graves equates with priests and magicians, are those who will help the Goddess ascend to power. Graves asserts that the "Muse poets who understand what is happening, and what is at stake, even more clearly perhaps than historians and anthropologists, can provide the emotional physic to which the rising generation, many of them painfully caught in the Goddess's net will take recourse" (Oxford Addresses on Poetry 13). Graves adds in his second lecture at Oxford that "it may happen that before long, a few dedicated poets, by imparting this knowledge [that the cult of the Goddess is at hand] to their fellow-men, will change the present disagreeable climate of human thought. Such at least is my faith; the only alternative seems to be universal catastrophe" (78).

The purpose of the present chapter is to demonstrate that Graves, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, in his attempt to avert what he believed to be the probable universal catastrophe, became a convert to and a mouthpiece of the Great Goddess. Furthermore, the present chapter will reveal Graves's esoteric conviction that the new age, along with the rising of the cult of the Goddess, would liberate human consciousness from the "Wheel" or occult law of eternal recurrence, and generate in

human consciousness a new faculty, the outcome of the assimilation of the opposites, that would enable humanity to transcend ordinary consciousness and reach the state symbolized in Graves's mythology by the Black Goddess. The new faculty, which Graves associates with his idea of "Genius" or the "Faculty of Certainty", presupposes an "understanding between Barak, the male mind, and Deborah, the female mind. This alone can lift humanity out of the morass which intellectual arrogance has sunk it and develop the so-called supernatural powers of which both sexes are capable" (Mammon and the Black Goddess 50).

### **Graves, Christianity, and the Goddess**

Graves's religious upbringing was as devout and earnest as that of Yeats, Crowley, and Pound. Even though Graves's grandfather "was an atheist who turned into an agnostic" (Seymour-Smith 7), Graves's parents were dedicated Protestants. In particular, Graves's zealous mother, in her eagerness to grant her son a thorough Christian education, communicated to the young Graves an abnormal fear concerning Christian morality and the concept of sin. According to Seymour-Smith, Graves's "strict-minded mother inculcated in her imaginative son terrible fears. . . . The ungainly, large boy . . . was not only terrified of eternal damnation, of burning fiery furnaces and of fearful prophecies, but was also excessively superstitious" (10). Graves admits in his autobiography that his religious upbringing "developed in [him] a great capacity for fear. I was perpetually tortured by the fear of hell" (Good-bye To All That: An Autobiography 13). The irrational fears that his mother inculcated in him constitute, to a certain degree, a reason for Graves's final alienation from Christianity. Graves declares in his autobiography that as a young boy, he had "great religious fervour which persisted until shortly after [his] confirmation at the age of sixteen" (11). Furthermore, Graves, in "The Uses of Superstition: A Talk at M.I.T, 1963", confesses that even though he was raised a Protestant, he had abandoned his "faith in the Christian doctrine at the age of fifteen being no longer able to subscribe



intellectually to the main tenets of the Apostle's Creed. I began to doubt that a Father God had created heaven and earth" (The Crane Bag and Other Disputed Subjects 205).

From Graves's point of view his rejection of Christianity was not an irreligious act. Paradoxical as it might sound, Graves was a very religious man, whose religious yearnings, though, could not be satisfied by Christianity. His poetic intuition rebelled against the strict patriarchal morality, which Graves considered obsolete and insufficient to the spiritual needs of present humanity. The Christian Bible, the mouthpiece of patriarchal morality, was for Graves an unacceptable and "dangerous book" ("The Bible in Europe" 62), "edited . . . by a monotheistic and misogynous Guild of prophets; they set themselves to delete all favourable reference to women who controlled men by their intuitive wisdom" (Mammon and the Black Goddess 49).

Unsatisfied with the morals of his age, and armed with his poetic intuition, Graves undertook a life long study of the history of religion in order to discover the spiritual values that would satisfy his religious yearnings. Graves, in his pursuit of everlasting values, followed closely the history of Christianity, and his conclusions about its origins coincide with those of Pound and of the esoteric tradition. Specifically, Graves believed that Christianity was not an autonomous religion, but a continuation of the patriarchal creeds that spread throughout Europe after the fall of matriarchy.

Graves attributes the moral anarchy and mental confusion of the present era to the schism in human consciousness which took place when patriarchy superseded matriarchy, or when the balance between the masculine and feminine principle was disrupted by the rise of the patriarchal creeds; this schism is also apparent in the esoteric tradition itself, which was subsequently divided into the chthonic and solar fractions. In "Intimations of the Black Goddess", Graves points out that "the chaotic ethics of our epoch derive, I believe, from a revolution in early historical times that upset the balance between male and female principles: namely the suppression of matriarchy by patriarchy" (Mammon and the Black Goddess 145). Similarly, Graves,

in "Mammon: Annual Oration, the London School of Economics and Political Science, Dec. 6, 1963", declares that in his opinion, "the political and social confusion of the last three-thousand years has been entirely due to man's revolt against women as a priestess of natural magic, and his defeat of her wisdom by the use of intellect" (47).

Graves, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, adheres to the chthonic esoteric tradition and is its harbinger. Graves, like Pound, was convinced that the cult of the Mother-Goddess was the original European religion par excellence, that the "Great Triple Moon-Goddess [had] . . . mothered the Mediterranean races" (King Jesus 8), and that as a "goddess of life and death . . . [the goddess] ruled Europe long before any male gods appeared" ("Speaking Freely" in Difficult Questions, Easy Answers 122). Even though Graves was not a theologian or historian of religion by profession, nevertheless, he realized, as he declared in a letter to Lynette Roberts, dated Dec. 4, 1943, that "the whole Christian business is badly in need of clearing up. Its formidably crystallized errors and inconsistencies get in everyone's way" (320). Relying basically on primary sources, that is, on "Welsh-Irish-Greek-Roman-Gallic religious traditions", on "early Christian literature (the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts and 'Sayings of Christ') and Egyptian and Talmudic tradition, and of Josephus, etc." (In Broken Images: Selected Letters of Robert Graves 320), as well as on Frazer's The Golden Bough,<sup>1</sup> Graves traced the origins of Christianity to the esoteric patriarchal creeds which preceded Christianity, and which, after the fall of matriarchy, were differentiated from the original body of the chthonic esoteric tradition.

As we have demonstrated in the first chapter, even a perfunctory study of the Essenes and Mithraism reveals the similarities between these two mystery cults and Christianity, as well as their connection with the original cult of the Mother-Goddess. According to Graves, the similarities between Mithraism and Christianity "are

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<sup>1</sup>John B. Vickery, in The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough, affirms that Graves had a "great and detailed familiarity with all volumes" (38) of The Golden Bough.



remarkable. Mithras was not, of course, a human being like Jesus, elevated to Godhead by his worshippers, but a mythical character, the spirit of the Unconquered Sun" ("The Bible in Europe" 60). Furthermore, Graves remarks that "the substitution of Sunday for Saturday and the Nativity legends, seem borrowed, probably by St. Paul, from Mithraism. The Communion rite, which is omitted from all four gospels and introduced into Gentile Christianity apparently on St. Paul's authority as a divine revelation from Jesus, seems borrowed from the Mithraic military rite" ("The Bible in Europe" 61).

St. Paul was, according to Graves, responsible for the institution of Christianity. Graves hints that Paul was an Alexandrian<sup>2</sup> Gnostic who had access to the esoteric tradition and held the key to the understanding of Christian myths and symbolism which connected Christianity with the preceding patriarchal cults. Graves, in "The Bible in Europe", states that "Paul was the chief architect of Christianity, though officially ranking below Peter. . . . Paul's claim to have once risen to the third of seven Heavens (II. Corinthians XII, 1-4) shows that he was acquainted with the pre-Christian Alexandrian Gnostics who invented this concept and whose influence on the 'Gospel according to St. John' is well known" (43-44). Paul, an adherent of the solar esoteric tradition, formulated the new religion in accordance to the requisites of patriarchy and obliterated, therefore, any reference to the name of the Great Goddess. Paul, according to Graves, initiates "the third stage of cultural development--the purely patriarchal, in which there are no Goddesses at all" (The White Goddess 389), and in which the Supreme Being is identified with a male entity, "credited with male thoughts and actions and served by male priests to whom women owe implicit obedience" ("The Bible in Europe" 46). The Supreme Being, however, in the first stage of cultural development, marked by the "Aegean religion" or cult of the Mother-

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<sup>2</sup>Graves asserts in The White Goddess that the "Alexandrian Gnostics . . . were the spiritual heirs of the Essenes after Hadrian had suppressed the Order in 132 A.D" (150).

Goddess, and in which the concept of fatherhood was unknown, was, for Graves, the Star-son of the Great-Goddess, symbol of light and Spring (the conscious powers in the human psyche), always at war with its twin brother, the Serpent, symbol of darkness and Winter (the subconscious powers). According to Graves, the

Star-son and Serpent are at war; one succeeds the other in the Moon-woman's favour, as summer succeeds winter, and winter succeeds summer; as death succeeds birth and birth succeeds death. The sun grows weaker or stronger as the year takes its course, the branches of the tree are now loaded and now bare, but the light of the Moon is invariable. She [Mother-Goddess] is impartial: she destroys or creates with equal passion. (The White Goddess 388)

In the second stage of cultural development, which Graves calls the "Olympian stage", the balance and unity of the first stage is disrupted, a "new child" superseded "both the Star-son and the Serpent. He was celebrated by poets as the Thunder-child, or the Axe-child, or the Hammer-child" (The White Goddess 389). After exterminating the Serpent, the Thunder-child "became the Father-god, or Thunder-god, married his mother and begot his divine sons and daughters on her" (The White Goddess 389).

In the third stage, as we have demonstrated in the first chapter, the Star-son of the Mother-Goddess denies his parentage and calls himself the Supreme leader of the cosmos. The Star-son, having rejected his feminine qualities, becomes inevitably an enemy of poetry and the arts. Graves asserts that the third stage is

unfavourable to poetry. Hymns addressed to the Thunder-god . . . fail as poems, because to credit him with illimitable and unrestrained power denies the poet's inalienable allegiance to the Muse; and because though the Thunder-god has been a jurist, logician, declamator and prose stylist, he has never been a poet or had the least understanding of true poems since he escaped from his Mother's tutelage. (The White Goddess 389-390).

The Jews, according to Graves, were responsible for propagating and strengthening patriarchal dogma in the European world, and for severing the ties of



their religion with the cult of the Mother-Goddess. Graves, in King Jesus, using the narrator, Agabus, as his mouthpiece, claims that

the Jews as a nation have persuaded themselves that they differ in one main particular from all others that live on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea: namely, that they never owed any duty either to the Great Triple Moon-Goddess who is generally reputed to have mothered the Mediterranean races, or to any other goddess or nymph whatsoever. This claim is untenable, for their sacred books preserve clear traces of their former attachment. . . . The Jews have been prime leaders in the religious movement against her not only in their own country but in all the countries of the Dispersion. They have proclaimed Jehovah as the sole Ruler of the Universe and represented the Goddess as a mere demoness, witch, Queen of Harlots, succuba and prime mischief-maker. (8)

Graves insists that by taking into account Jewish mythology, with its insistence on Jehovah as the supreme ruler of the universe, and the historical fact (at least for Graves) that patriarchy superceded matriarchy, one can understand better the story of the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, who, for Graves was a devout Jew, heir to the throne of Judah, and "true to Jehovah from his childhood onward without a single lapse in loyalty" (King Jesus 9). According to J.M. Cohen, Graves, in King Jesus, "sets out a hypothesis which turns all Jewish and Christian traditions completely upside down" (93). Indeed, according to Graves's hypothesis, Jesus, the son of Miriam, a daughter of the House of David, and Antipater, son of King Herod, was an Essene initiate on a mission to undermine the cult of the Mother-Goddess, who took literally the occult eschatological belief that the end of the world was imminent.

Graves believed that Christ never compared himself to God, nor considered himself the saviour of humanity by dying on the cross for its sins. In fact, according to Graves, Christ survived the cross and probably lived the life of an ordinary man. Graves and Joshua Podro, in the much disputed The Nazarene Gospel Restored, claim that "Jesus was a devout Jew belonging to a small apocalyptic sect known as Zophim, or 'watchers for the kingdom', and organized on free Essene lines. He took the

contemporary Pharisaic attitude towards the Mosaic Law [and] . . . never equated himself with God" (xii). Furthermore, Graves and Podro accuse the Church of deliberately suppressing the facts concerning the story of the historical Jesus, namely that Jesus "neither preached to the Gentiles, nor encouraged his apostles to do so, nor showed any concern for their fate, and that he hourly expected the literal fulfilment of eschatological prophecies. We [Graves and Podro] hold also that he officially died on the cross; but afterwards when he recovered from his death-like coma and found that the kingdom of Heaven had not come, it was gradually borne in upon him that his sacrifice had been premature" (633).

In a sense, however, Christ's sacrifice had not been premature since it triggered the genesis of Christianity, "a stubbornly patriarchal religion" (Graves, "The Bible in Europe" 27), which, in accordance with the demands of its founder, declared war on the female and strived to eradicate any trace of the former cult of the Goddess in the religious consciousness of the people. The historical Christ, however, was not, for Graves, the founder of Christianity. The Christ of the Church or of the New Testament was a mythical occult character created out of the Gnostic philosophy promoted by Paul, who was an initiate to the solar esoteric tradition. Graves and Podro, in Jesus in Rome: A Historical Conjecture, assert that "Roman Catholic Christianity combines the Aramaic Apostolic tradition with St. Paul's heretical teaching--a 'free' variety of Judaism--and with extraneous and alien religious theory derived largely from Alexandrian Gnostic Philosophy by way of The Gospel According to St. John" (7).

Graves, relying on Gnostic philosophy, explains in a 1946 letter to Gertrude Stein, that in the story of Jesus Christ there are four characters involved: Jesus as historical character, the Hebrew Messiah, the Gnostic Christ or Son of Man, and the European Divine Child "first found in Crete, [called] Dionysus or Zagreus or Eleusis" (In Broken Images: Selected Letters of Robert Graves, 1914-1946 341). The historical character of Jesus, who was, for Graves, a "pure Nationalist intellectual" (In



Broken Images 341) who never equated himself with God, did not identify himself "with the transcendental Son of Man. His title 'Son of God' was an ancient religious one, acquired at the Coronation" (Jesus in Rome: A Historical Conjecture 10). Graves, in The White Goddess, as well as in King Jesus, makes it clear that Christ believed he was the Hebrew Messiah whose sacrifice would bring forth the Son of Man, the saviour that would "initiate the deathless millenary kingdom of God on earth, to which the Gentile nations would ultimately be admitted" (The White Goddess 472). Moreover, Graves believes that "Jesus expected the actual historical appearance of the Son of Man on the Mount of Olives to follow his own prophesied death by the sword, and assured his disciples that many then living would never die but enter directly into the Kingdom of God. The prophecy was not fulfilled because it was founded on a confusion between poetic myth<sup>3</sup> and historical event, and everyone's hopes of the millennium were dashed" (The White Goddess 472).

When formulating the new religion, St. Paul, a Gnostic initiate who had never met<sup>4</sup> Christ in person, never meant to make divine the historical character of Jesus. In his Epistles he expresses his belief in the metaphysical concept of the Gnostic Christ or Son of Anthropos, that is, the Christ who exists within the human soul and is the symbol of the divine, transcendental nature of humanity. Paul's<sup>5</sup> belief in the Gnostic

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<sup>3</sup>Poetic myth refers to the precession of the Equinoxes or the Cycle of Precession. According to this poetic myth, at the end of the world, that is, at the end of the two-thousand year period, the Prince of Peace or Son of Man or the Coming Son, is incarnated in the world. The Coming Son, however, is only a metaphysical figure and not an actual historical personality, and refers to the "historic event" which in Christ's time happened when the colure of the vernal equinox entered the sign of the Fishes at about 255 B.C.

<sup>4</sup>Graves, in "Don't Fidget Young Man", conjectures that "the two men met in the flesh near Damascus in March, 35 A.D." (Steps 181).

<sup>5</sup>We should emphasize, however, Paul's allegiance to Jehovah, the strict masculine spirit. According to Massey, Paul "is the great opponent of those Gnostics who maintained the supremacy of the feminine wisdom or logos, and who set forth the Essene doctrine of angels, or the gnostic aeons" (Natural Genesis 366). And again, Massey remarks that "Paul is at one with those Gnostics who represented that it was Nous alone, or the masculine mental logos who had the intelligence necessary for the discovery of God the Father" (Natural Genesis 368).

Christ and not in the actual personality of Jesus, made him an enemy of Christ's Apostles, who agreed to believe in the literal rendering of the Christian myths. Graves, in "The Bible in Europe", commenting on Paul and James's troubled relations, probably resulting from Paul's heretic belief in the Gnostic Christ and not in the literal interpretation of the Christian myths by the Apostles, hints at Paul's Gnostic affiliations and states that "there seems to have been a complete breach between James and Paul at their second meeting in Jerusalem which took place some thirty years before the destruction of the Temple" (46). When Paul died, some of his Gnostic ideas were suppressed and some tampered with, an act which probably explains what Graves calls the "confused sense" of "Paul's story . . . given in the Acts of the Apostles" ("The Bible in Europe" 43). Moreover, Graves and Podro, in The Nazarene Gospel Restored, claim that "the original Nazarene Gospel was terse, factually accurate and intellectually satisfying to those students of the law and the prophets for whom it was primarily intended. But Gentile heretics pivoted it, mistranslated it into pedestrian Greek, recast it, and then subjected it to a century long process of emendation and manipulation" (xiii).

Graves, however, does not specify who those Gentile heretics were who emendated the original Gnostic Gospel and suppressed the original founder of Christianity who, for Graves, is the Gnostic and not the historic Christ. What is certain, though, is that these Church mythologists, according to Graves, have frozen the Christian myths "beyond the point where they can be unfrozen" ("Two Studies in Scientific Atheism" in The Crane Bag 27). Thus, Graves, versed in the esoteric tradition, believed, like Pound, that this conspiracy of the Church mythologists or the Gentile heretics lead to the suppression of not only the elements of the chthonic esoteric tradition or the single poetic Theme, that Graves refers to in The White Goddess, but also of the solar esoteric tradition, which constitutes the foundation of Christianity. Once the roots of Christianity were cut off from its esoteric fountain, and the esoteric symbolism of the myths forgotten, patriarchal Christianity gave birth



to the pseudo-cult of Mammon.<sup>6</sup> According to Graves, the vicious circle started with the "suppression of matriarchy by patriarchy led to the suppression of patriarchy by democracy, of democracy by plutocracy, and of plutocracy by mechanarchy disguised as technology" ("What Has Gone Wrong?" in Difficult Questions, Easy Answers 117). Referring to the degeneration of Christianity into the cult of Mammon, Graves, in "What Has Gone Wrong", using an analogy from Greek mythology, asserts that the gods who usurped the place of Zeus or Jehovah, the patriarchal god, lack the power to satisfy the religious sentiment of the people, while Zeus or the Christian God can no longer intervene and ask the assistance of his mother, the Goddess, since He has denied her in the first place (116). Similarly, Graves, in The White Goddess, notes that

though the West is still nominally Christian, we have come to be governed, in practice, by the unholy triumvirate (sic) of Pluto god of wealth, Apollo god of science, and Mercury god of thieves. To make matters worse, dissension and jealousy rage openly between these three, with Mercury and Pluto blackguarding each other, while Apollo wields the atomic bomb as if it were a thunderbolt; for since the Age of Reason was heralded by his eighteenth-century philosophers, he has seated himself on the vacant throne of Zeus (temporarily indisposed) as Triumdival Regent. (476)

Graves's belief in the existence of the god of Mammon reflects Pound's belief in the conspiracy of usura. Mammon and usura represent the same concept, that is, the anti-poetic spirit which destroys religious sentiment and debases human nature to a mechanical level. Graves, echoing Pound, declares in "What Has Gone Wrong?" that "modern business men [are] dedicated to the serious cult of Mammon" (Difficult Questions, Easy Answers 141), and that science, enlisted by Mammon, is "covertly working against poetry" ("What Has Gone Wrong?" 121). Graves even acknowledges

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<sup>6</sup>Graves differentiates between the Mammon of righteousness and the Mammon of unrighteousness. In "Speaking Freely", Graves observes that in modern Western society, Mammon, which is the Hebrew word for money, "has become a self-sufficient and conscienceless god" (Difficult Questions Easy Answers 193).

Pound's extreme idea of international monopolists conspiring to control financially the world. For Graves, "Mammon . . . exploits the discoveries of science for the benefits of international financiers enabling them to amass more and more money and it is hoped, eventually to control all markets and governments everywhere" ("What Has Gone Wrong?" 119). Moreover, Graves, in "Speaking Freely",<sup>7</sup> echoes Pound's radio speeches of World War II. Graves, commenting on the Vietnam War, asks his interviewer, "who's making the money out of [the bombs] manufacture?" (204); thus, he refers to the interests of the munitions dealers who, he believes, sustain the war and are the real protagonists behind the scenes. In the same interview, Graves stresses that it is not enough for peace demonstrators to rally against war; they should also attempt to expose the conspiracy which creates wars. Graves exclaims that "it's no good waving flags, fifty abreast and shouting: 'we don't like war'. That's not practical. One must show who's been cheating, who is been lying, who is been making the money in what unjust business" (206).

The conspiracy of Mammon has managed to debase Christianity to such an extent that it can no longer be considered a religion, since its original myths, based on the chthonic and solar esoteric traditions, have been subverted and forgotten,<sup>8</sup> so that its rituals can no longer satisfy the religious instincts of the people. Graves, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, was an adherent of the chthonic esoteric tradition, or the single poetic Theme, and believed that the latter, after the official establishment of patriarchal Christianity in the Roman world, went underground on a mission to preserve the spirit of the Great Goddess in the world. Graves, in The White Goddess, maintains that several attempts have been made by the adherents of the Goddess to

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<sup>7</sup>Interview granted to Edwin Newman on the American Air, February 15, 1970.

<sup>8</sup>Graves, in The White Goddess, asserts that even though the interpretation of the Christian myths "has long been lost" (463), still, the key to the lost meaning of the mysteries lies in the chthonic esoteric tradition, that the explanation of the mysteries is "not irrecoverably lost, since we may be sure that the doctrine developed from Judaeo-Greek mythology . . . is ultimately based on the single poetic Theme" (464), that is, the chthonic esoteric tradition.



intervene and heal the rift between Christianity and the cult of the Goddess: "various attempts at bridging it by the Clementines, Collyridians, Manichees and other early Christian heretics and by the Virgin-worshipping palmers and troubadours of Crusading times have left their mark on Church ritual and doctrine, but have always been succeeded by a strong puritanical reaction " (425).

After the suppression of the early chthonic Gnostic sects, the Knights Templar were responsible for the propagation of the antithetical knowledge to the Western world. Graves believed that the Templars, who "had been collaborationists with Islam during the Crusades" ("The Uses of Superstition: Talk at M.I.T., 1963 in The Crane Bag 222), received their secret heretical knowledge from their affiliation with "mystical Saracen freemasonry" ("The Uses of Superstition" 222). Graves, in his introduction to Idries Shah's The Sufis, maintains that the Templars "were accused of collaborating with Saracene Sufis" (xiv), who were part of an "ancient spiritual freemasonry whose origins have never been traced or dated" (viv). Sufism, which according to Eliade is "one of the most important traditions of Islamic esoterism" (A History of Religious Ideas, III: 122), is analogous to Gnosticism; its affiliations lie with the chthonic esoteric tradition, since Sufists insist, like the Gnostics, in Gnosis, that is, in the direct, initiatory mystical experience of the individual with the Supreme Being. Eliade affirms, in A History of Religious Ideas, that the Sufists "were staunchly antirationalists; for them true religious knowledge was obtained by a personal experience ending in a momentary union with God. . . . One can detect in Sufism the influences of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and Manicheanism" (III, 124). Graves, in his introduction to Shah's The Sufis, remarks that after the dissemination of Sufism by the Templars in the European world, "Sufi thought continued to be a secret force running parallel to Orthodox Christianity" (xix). This secret heretical force inspired, according to Graves, the Albigensian heresy and the Troubadour movement. Graves, in "The Anti-Poet: Oxford Chair of Poetry Lecture II", claims that "the troubadour's real debt was to Sufism" (Oxford Addresses on Poetry 66), and that

"Sufic thought . . . contributed to the Albigensian heresy" (67). Graves, in "The Bible in Europe", stressing the feminine antipatriarchal manner of the Troubadour movement, affirms that "women's gradual restoration to moral responsibility and freedom of choice in love--though the priesthood was still withheld from them--came with the romantic Troubadour movement, a product of the Arabo-Persian tradition" (58). Furthermore, Graves believed that in addition to the Troubadour movement and the Albigensian heresy, even Freemasonry commenced as an offshoot of the Sufic branch of the chthonic esoteric tradition, disseminated by the Templars in the Western world. Graves, in his introduction to Shah's The Sufis, reveals that

Freemasonry itself began as a Sufi society. It first reached England in the reign of King Aethelstan (924-939) and was introduced into Scotland disguised as a craft guild at the beginning of the fourteenth century, doubtless by the Knights Templars. Its reformation in early eighteenth century London, by a group of Protestant sages who mistook its Saracen terms for Hebrew, has obscured many of its early traditions. Richard Burton, translator of the Thousand and One Nights, being both a Freemason and a Sufi, first pointed out the close relation between the two societies, but he was not sufficiently advanced in either to realize that Freemasonry had begun as a Sufi group. (xix-xx)

Sufism was also responsible, according to Graves, for Mariolatry or the worship of the Black Virgin, that is, the worship of the Triple Moon-Goddess in the figure of the Virgin Mary. Graves, in The White Goddess, describes how the cult of Mary came to England from the Holy Land via Spain, and how the figure of Mary was just another symbol for the Great Goddess or Aphrodite. Graves notes in The White Goddess that "when the Crusaders invaded the Holy Land, built castles and settled down, they found a number of heretical Christian sects living there under Moslem protection, who soon seduced them from orthodoxy. This was how the cult of Mary Gipsy came to England, brought through Compostella in Spain by poor pilgrims with palm-branches in their hands, copies of the Apocryphal Gospels in their wallets and Aphrodite's scallop-shells stitched in their caps" (396). The Troubadours were for



Graves enthusiastic devotees of the cult of Mary or, in other words, adherents of the chthonic esoteric tradition. Graves, in The White Goddess, maintains that "the lyre-plucking, red-stockinged troubadours, of whom King Richard Lion-Heart is the best remembered in Britain, ecstatically adopted the Marian cult" (396). Furthermore, Graves believed that the symbolism of the cult of the Black Virgin is pertinent to that of Gnosticism. Graves asserts in "The Bible in Europe" that the Black Virgin "represents Mary as wisdom--the use of 'black' for 'wise' having been borrowed by the Crusaders from Saracen usage, the two words in Arabic being almost identical" (58). In Gnosticism, the Virgin Mary takes the place of the Christian male Holy Spirit, and is identified with "Sophia, Wisdom; and Wisdom was female" (The White Goddess 157). Furthermore, the Gnostics, who were the carriers of the esoteric tradition, were aware of Mary's association with the Great Goddess. Graves, in The White Goddess, remarks that "in Gnostic theory . . . Jesus was conceived in the mind of God's Holy Spirit, who was female in Hebrew and, according to Genesis I, 2, 'moved on the face of the waters'. The Virgin Mary was the physical vessel in which this concept was incarnate and 'Mary' to the Gnostics meant 'Of the sea'" (157). Graves identifies Mary 'Of the Sea' with the Great Goddess or Aphrodite, the "'Wise One of the Sea' . . . the Minoan Dove-goddess who rose from the sea at Paphos in Cyprus every year with her virginity renewed" (The White Goddess 157), and who during the yearly Eleusinian Mysteries brought forth the Divine Child, who "was produced by mystagogues, dressed as shepherds, for the adoration of the celebrants" (The White Goddess 157).

The myth of the Divine Child or Son of Adam, "who was celebrated at the Dionysian and Delphic mysteries ages before [the historical] Jesus was born" (In Broken Images 341), is presented in Graves's historical novel King Jesus. In King Jesus, Jesus, who had declared war upon the female (342), becomes in the end, ironically, the Goddess's sacrificial victim, the sacred king who has to be sacrificed

annually for the welfare of his people.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the novel, just before the ascension of Christ, the Apostles, who had followed their master, observe "near the summit three women [who] stood side by side on a knoll: Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary his queen, and a very tall woman whose face was veiled. These three beckoned to him as if with a single hand, and he went towards them, smiling. But before he reached them, a sudden mist enveloped the mountain and, when it cleared, Jesus and the three women were gone" (351). By presenting Jesus as the sacrificial victim of the Goddess, Graves wants to express his conviction that the patriarchal spirit did not succeed in extinguishing the worship of the Goddess in the religious consciousness of the people after all. Graves believed that the cult of the Goddess or chthonic esoteric tradition or the "Theme reasserted itself popularly with the Virgin as the White Goddess, Jesus as the Waxing Sun, the Devil as the Waning Sun" (The White Goddess 473).

Graves, in "The Bible in Europe", turning against Christian Fundamentalism,<sup>10</sup> which he considers a "disease of Christianity" (31), defends his rejection of Christianity because, as he says, when an honest agnostic confronts fundamentalism he/she "feels his mind becoming split into two irreconcilable parts, the religious and the practical, [and] feels obliged to leave the Church for the protection of his sanity" (31). Graves, as an agnostic, embraced naturally the ideas of Gnosticism. Commenting on Sufism and its impact on Graves's thought, Michael Kirkham, in The Poetry of Robert Graves, affirms that "Graves has evidently discovered in Sufism a

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<sup>9</sup>The impact of Frazer's The Golden Bough on Graves's King Jesus is apparent. According to Vickery, Graves's King Jesus is a "mythopoeic rendering of the cultural adaptability of the dying and reviving god figure" (The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough 148). Furthermore, Vickery summarizing Frazer's basic argument of The Golden Bough, states that "to many primitive peoples . . . the priest-king is regarded as an incarnation of various divine beings, that is, he constitutes the connecting link between men and the gods. . . . As a result his life is considered to be sympathetically bound up with the prosperity and welfare of the country as a whole" (The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough 50).

<sup>10</sup>Graves, in "The Bible in Europe", defines Christian Fundamentalism as the "literal acceptance of myths and metaphors used throughout the Bible" (31).



way of thought closely resembling his own" (6-7). Graves, in his introductory letter to "The Feather Bed", addressed to John Crowe Ransom, expresses his disagreement with the patriarchal God, whom he considers "violent, blundering, deceitful", and at the same time proclaims his sympathy with Lucifer, the morning star, whom he regards as "the hope of eventual adjustment between ancient habits and present needs" (qtd. in Kirkham, The Poetry of Robert Graves 74).

Graves, who "has always been on the side of the old gods" (Cohen, Robert Graves 19), is not a Satanist in the modern, Christian sense of the word, nor a "charlatan who imposes upon reality a world of private fantasies" (Steiner, "The Genius of Robert Graves" 340). Satan, or the Serpent or Devil, is for Graves one of the twin sons of the Great Goddess, and particularly the son who represents the dark-half of the Moon-Goddess, the subconscious powers of the human psyche. Graves, in The White Goddess, demonstrates that the Goddess "has a son who is also her lover and her victim, the Star-son, or Demon of the Waxing year. He alternates in her favour with his tanist Python, the Serpent of Wisdom, the Demon of the Waning year, his darker self" (393). In matriarchal times, when the symbolism<sup>11</sup> of the twins and the Goddess was understood, there was harmony and unity in the religious consciousness of the people, as the two sons of the Goddess, the son of the Mother, and the son of Man were alternated equally in her favour, and there was no unresolved conflict between them. After the Fall, however, when patriarchy superseded matriarchy, and the original myths were suppressed and forgotten, the Devil or Lucifer,<sup>12</sup> was no longer considered or represented as one of the twin sons of the

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<sup>11</sup>See Appendix II, "Occult Hermeneutics and Astronomy".

<sup>12</sup>Lucifer is the Son who brings forth the Light or Star-Son, that is, the Son of the Mother who precedes or gives way to the Son of Man or Star-Son, the Waxing days of the Moon. In the Christian mythology, interpreted in esoteric terms, Christ is the Son of Man or Star-Son, that is, the Son who dominates or represents the first fourteen waxing days of the moon. But it is the second half of the moon, the fourteen waning days, or the Son of the Mother, who is going to give birth to the Star-Son or Son of Man. John the Baptist represents, in Christian mythology, the Son of the Mother, the

Goddess, and brother to the Star-Son. He was considered the embodiment of evil, equated in the consciousness of early Christians with the female, an association which inevitably promoted unresolved dualism. Graves, in The White Goddess, remarks that "the new God claimed to be dominant as Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, pure Holiness, pure Logic, able to exist without the aid of woman; but it was natural to identify him with one of the original rivals of the Theme and to ally the woman and the other rival permanently against him. The outcome was philosophical dualism with all the tragi-comic woes attendant on spiritual dichotomy" (465).

This unresolved dualism, which patriarchal Christianity imposed on the Western world, constitutes, for Graves, the source of spiritual anarchy, confusion, and degeneration which rakes Western civilization. In a sense, Graves becomes the advocate of the Devil or Serpent, affirming in The White Goddess, that "the goat is bleating in protest that the Goddess's head is turned away and insists that it is now his turn to be cosseted. In Christianity the sheep are permanently favoured at the expense of the goats and the Theme is mutilated" (425). Since the Theme is mutilated, that is, since the chthonic esoteric tradition has been suppressed, the rituals of Christianity, devoid of their original meaning, can no longer satisfy the religious hunger of the people; they cannot re-enact the past and help humanity remember its prelapsarian state.

According to Eliade, contemporary Western society "is in quest of a new myth, which alone could enable it to draw upon fresh spiritual resources and renew its creative powers" (Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries 25). Graves, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, felt intuitively the need for a new religion, and as a poet he felt responsible for re-establishing communication between humanity and its divine source. Commenting on Graves's religious convictions, Cohen, in Robert Graves, remarks that Graves's The White Goddess "becomes in its final chapters a tract for the

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twin brother of Jesus, the prodromos, who is preparing the way or giving way to the Star-Son or Son of the Father.



age" (96), and that the remedy Graves proposes for the lack of spirituality in contemporary Western society "lies in the revival of goddess-worship, the reversion from patriarchal to matriarchal society, and the abandonment of cold intellectuality" (96).

Even though Graves did not officially declare himself the prophet<sup>13</sup> of the Great Goddess, his sympathy and support to the Goddess is still overwhelming. Graves, in "The White Goddess: A Talk for the Y.M.H.A. Centre, New York. February 9, 1957", notes that "I can't make out why a belief in a father-god's authorship of the universe and its laws, should be considered any more scientific than a belief in the inspiration of this artificial system by the Mother Goddess. In fact, granted the first metaphor, the second follows logically" (Steps 95). Furthermore, Graves remarks that the times are not "propitious for reviving her worship, in a civilized world governed (or misgoverned) almost exclusively by the ambitious male intelligence" ("The White Goddess: A Talk for the Y.M.H.A. Centre" 95). And yet, Graves does not rule out the possibility that the Goddess will dominate the world's religious stage once again. In his Y.M.H.A. speech, Graves observes that since the Catholic church recognizes the divinity of Virgin Mary, it is only a matter of time before the cult of the Goddess reasserts itself. According to Graves, "the Catholic Church has given the Virgin Mary of the attributes that belonged to the ancient Triple Moon-Goddess; and she can now legitimately be saluted as 'the Queen of Heaven'. [Consequently] . . . social changes may well follow: changes that will obviously be

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<sup>13</sup>In response to Jarrell's sarcastic accusation that "there is only one Goddess, and Graves is her prophet", Graves replies in "The White Goddess: A Talk for the Y.M.H.A. Centre" that he is not a prophet of the Goddess, that a prophet "is by definition one who speaks in the name of a deity, like Moses or John the Baptist, or Mohammed, with: 'thus saith the Lord!'. . . . To acknowledge the Goddess's power is a very different matter from saying in a ringing baritone: 'Thus saith the Goddess'" (104). Graves in The White Goddess, even though he declares that he is not a prophet of the Goddess, still exclaims that "a simple loving declaration: 'None greater in the universe than the Triple-Goddess!' has been made implicitly or explicitly by all true Muse-poets since poetry began" (492).

reflected in religious dogma (if this [Protestant<sup>14</sup> impulse] system collapses)" (99). Moreover, Graves in the same speech, predicts that the coming of the Goddess is imminent, that the "growing popularity of Muse-poets . . . and the growing mistrust of Orthodox Christian dogma among the educated classes, throughout the Western world, suggest that such a religious revolution may already be brewing" (99). In addition, Graves in his futuristic novel Seven Days in New Crete, using the persona Quant as his mouthpiece, characterizes Christianity as "a symptom of man's spiritual fever: [which] brought diversion, rather than change" (198), and declares that "if mankind were to survive at all, the Goddess must be re-instated in power" (199).

Like Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, and Pound's The Cantos, Graves's The White Goddess, a "feministic tour de force" (Day 22), is, in a sense, a manifesto declaring the rising of the Goddess in the religious consciousness of Western people. Graves, in The White Goddess, commenting on the future of religion in the West, recognizes the inability of Christianity to cope with the spiritual impasse that it has created, and affirms that a solution probably lies in the demythologization of Christianity to uncover its essential truth. The unravelling of Christian myths would metamorphose Christianity into a mystery cult, and would expose that its essential truth is irrevocably linked with the cult of the Great Goddess. According to Graves,

Christianity has little chance of maintaining its hold on the governing classes unless the historical part of ecclesiastical doctrine can be separated from the mythical: that is to say, unless a distinction can be drawn between the historical concept 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews', and the equally valid mythical concepts 'Christ' and 'Son of Man' in terms of which alone the Virgin Birth, the Ascension and the miracles make unchallengeable sense. If this were to happen, Christianity would develop into a pure mystery-cult, with a Christ, divorced from his temporal history, paying the Virgin-Queen of

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<sup>14</sup>The Protestants are traditionally against Mariolatry and refused to acknowledge the divinity of Mary, considering it, according to Graves, a reversion to Paganism.



Heaven a filial obedience that Jesus of Nazareth reserved for his Incomprehensible Father.<sup>15</sup> (The White Goddess 481)

Thus, for Graves, as for Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, the new divinity becomes Christ, not the patriarchal Christ, the Son of the Father, but Christ, the Son of the Mother: "A mystical Virgin-born Christ, detached from Jewish eschatology and unlocalized in first-century Palestine, might restore religion to contemporary self-respect" (The White Goddess 481). However, a mystical Virgin-born Christ, faithful to the Goddess, will also acknowledge his other half, his twin brother, and thus re-establish unity and bring forth a new state of consciousness, symbolized by the Black Goddess. The Black Goddess, who presupposes the assimilation of the opposites in the human psyche, that is, in mythical terms the harmonious alternation of the twins in the Goddess's favour,

promises a new pacific bond between men and women, corresponding to a final reality of love, in which the patriarchal marriage bond will fade away. Unlike Vesta, the Black Goddess has experienced good and evil, love and hate, truth and falsehood in the person of her sister; but chooses what is good: rejecting serpent-love and corpse flesh. Faithful as Vesta, gay and adventurous as the White Goddess, she will lead man back to that sure instinct of love which he long ago forfeited by intellectual pride. ("Intimations of the Black Goddess" in Mammon and The Black Goddess 164)

And yet, Graves like Yeats, was not too optimistic about the progress of humanity and its conversion to the new religion. Graves in The White Goddess, predicts "no change for the better until everything gets far worse. Only after a period of complete political

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<sup>15</sup>Graves's conclusion reflects Frazer's conviction expressed in The Golden Bough, that Christianity "derives from these primitive fertility or vegetative cults in which the dying and reviving god is central" (Vickery, The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough 67), and that Jesus Christ is reduced to "the level of a multitude of other victims of a barbarous superstition . . . [being] no more than a moral teacher, whom the fortunate accident of his execution invested with the crown, not merely of a martyr, but of a god" (Frazer, The Golden Bough, IX: 422-423).

and religious disorganization can the suppressed desire of the Western races, which is for some practical form of Goddess-worship, with her love not limited to maternal benevolence and her after-world not deprived of a sea, find satisfaction at last" (484-485).

### Graves's Poetry and the White Goddess

Carter, in Robert Graves: The Lasting Poetic Achievement, observes that "Graves has undertaken the Herculean task of sweeping away three thousand years of a male-dominated civilization that has gone disastrously awry, in order to fetch us back to the orderliness, warmth and comfort of the matrilineal hearth" (16). Graves's poetry inevitably reflects his life-long struggle to reinstate the matriarchal, antithetical spirit in the world. For Graves, poetry becomes a way of life, an initiatory medium to express his inner intuitive self and to protest against the patriarchal, abstract, primary spirit. Graves, in "The Case for Xanthippe", asserts that poetry for him is a "peculiar attitude to life . . . a practical, humorous, reasonable way of being ourselves. Of never acquiescing in a fraud; of never accepting the second-rate in poetry, painting, music, love, friends. Of safe guarding our poetic institutions against the encroachments of mechanized, insensate, inhumane, abstract rationality" (The Crane Bag 67). Furthermore, Graves believes that poetic creation is strictly a matter which concerns the artist himself/herself and not the public; the artist should never compromise his poetry and style for the sake of the public. In his foreword to Poems 1938-1945, Graves, commenting on his work affirms: "I write poems for poets, and satires and grotesques for wits. For people in general I write prose and am content that they should be unaware that I do anything else. To write poems for other than poets is wasteful" (qtd. in Carter, Robert Graves 21). Furthermore, Graves, in a BBC broadcast, declares: "Frankly, honest Public, I am not professionally concerned with you, and expect nothing from you. . . . A poet needs no public" (qtd. in Stade, Robert Graves 5).



Cohen, in Robert Graves, claims that Graves's place in the English poetic tradition "is an isolated one. Not only has he never been a member of a school or followed any prevailing fashion, but even in generation he stands alone, too young to have experienced the impact of Continental Symbolism which struck W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Edwin Muir" (3). Even though Graves did not belong to any school of poetry, yet his position in poetry is not, as Cohen insists, an isolated one. Graves, in "Preface to a Reading of New Poems at the University of Michigan", confesses to his audience that "in the present confused state of literature, I probably rank as a traditionalist; but not as one who opposes innovations in poetic technique" (Steps 236). Graves was a traditionalist as well as a Romantic, but he was also a Muse poet, one who declared war on the patriarchal spirit and allegiance to the cult of the Great Goddess.

Graves, however, is not the only Muse poet of his generation. The Muse or Goddess also possessed and inspired the poetry of Yeats, Crowley,<sup>16</sup> and Pound. Even though Graves was familiar with Yeats's and Pound's poetry, still, paradoxically, Graves did not recognize his two contemporaries as Muse poets, that is, as poets who propagated in their poetry the coming of the Goddess and antithetical spirit. In the case of Yeats, it seems that Graves, despite his formidable esoteric knowledge, failed to penetrate the esotericism of Yeats's work, particularly A Vision.<sup>17</sup> Graves reached the hasty conclusion that Yeats deliberately muddled his

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<sup>16</sup>No evidence exists that Graves was aware of Crowley's literary work.

<sup>17</sup>Graves does not comment on Yeats's A Vision, a work that he probably found too baffling and obscure to mention. Seymour-Smith, in his biography on Graves, attempts unsuccessfully to compare briefly Yeats's A Vision, and Graves's The White Goddess. Seymour-Smith, who is, apparently, ignorant of the esoteric tradition, cannot grasp the esoteric importance of A Vision and its similarities to The White Goddess. According to Seymour-Smith, A Vision "is extraordinarily unsophisticated; it is vulgar . . . clearly it is not the work of an educated or an informed man. It is a compound of very unsound astrology and 'esoteric wisdom' culled from sects such as the Theosophists; it reads like a third-rate mystical treatise. It is an embarrassment to Yeats's admirers--as Auden frankly admitted. The White Goddess, however, is genuinely learned, although it is based on now outdated anthropological models"

poetry and had nothing important to say. According to Graves's biographer, Seymour-Smith, Yeats was "the object of [Graves's] unrelenting and life long dislike" (Robert Graves 3); Carter also claims that Graves held Yeats "in belligerent disrespect" (4). Though Graves praises Yeats as a skilled and conscientious poet in "The Crowning Privilege", yet he does not consider Yeats as a Muse poet, and accuses him of having no message to convey to his audience. According to Graves, "Yeats, while a man of industry and careful craftsmanship . . . lacked divine 'grace'. 'Grace' is the presence of the Muse Goddess: but she does not appear unless her poet has something urgent to say, and to win her consent, a poet must have something urgent to say. Yeats had a new technique, but nothing to say. . . . Instead of the Muse he employed a ventriloquist's dummy called Crazy Jane. But still he had nothing to say" (qtd. in Day 123). Furthermore, Day, assumes that Graves probably felt that the obscurity of Yeats's poetry was an insult to the Goddess or Muse, that "to publish poems strewn with references to which not one reader in ten million has the key, as Yeats did, is regarded as impudence by the Muse (although, it seems, it is perfectly acceptable to use obscure references if they all relate to myths connected with Goddess worship)"<sup>18</sup> (124).

Even though Graves did not consider Yeats a Muse poet, at least he approved of Yeats's craftsmanship. In Pound's case, however, Graves was too strict and critical to claim any merit in the former's poetry. Besides, Graves did not even consider Pound a poet. In response to a request from T. S. Eliot asking Graves to sign a petition in Pound's favour, so that the latter would not be tried for treason, Graves replied in a letter dated April 5, 1946, that "since 1911 when I first read Pound in

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(405). In addition to, Seymour-Smith's unfair interpretation of A Vision, his interpretation of The White Goddess, whose theme, Seymour-Smith believes, is Graves's 'invention', is outdated, since recent scholarship, as we have demonstrated in the first chapter, amply proves Graves's convictions.

<sup>18</sup>Day's assumption, though, seems to contradict Graves's philosophy, since, for Graves, the poet is not necessarily obliged to write for the general reader, but for the few other poets, the initiates, who have the analogous knowledge.



Harriet Monroe's Poetry magazine; and since 1922 when I met him for the first and last time in All Souls in T. E. Lawrence's room, I could never regard him as a poet and have consistently denied him the title. . . . If there were a single line or stanza of Pound's that recurred to my mind as true and beautiful, or merely as true, I should join in your plea--but to do so just because he is a 'name' would be unprincipled" (In Broken Images 342). Graves's outright rejection of Pound's poetry and personality is inexplicable, considering that they only met once in T. E. Lawrence's office at Oxford. Seymour-Smith asserts that Graves, in his first and last meeting with Pound, "was put off by Pound's Yankee manner and his jocose slang; he also felt that Pound was trying to bring 'continental' influences into English poetry--he was, then as now, largely insensitive to non-English poetries, and chose to ignore the influence they have exercised on English poetry at various times" (86). Graves's criticism of Pound's The Cantos, a work which is permeated with the same antithetical spirit of Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, and Graves's The White Goddess, is particularly severe. Graves, in "Sweeney Among the Black Birds. A Talk for the University of Texas, Feb. 27, 1958" a speech dripping with irony and sarcasm, claims hostilely that Pound's The Cantos falls "under the heading of vaudeville rather than education. They were published serially . . . and written hand-to-mouth with the same careless gusto. Architecturally, ethically, or musically they invite no serious criticism; being, by your leave, a random sequence of sighs, coos, Bronx cheers, rhetorically garbled scraps of history, quotations from foreign tongues, falsetto screams and indecent eructations" (Steps 114).

Despite Graves's strong sentiments against Pound, ironically, the basic views of the two poets concerning poetry and religious metaphysics are similar<sup>19</sup>. Pound, an adherent to the chthonic esoteric tradition, asked for a reinterpretation of the Christian Bible, and strongly felt the need for a new religion. Furthermore, Pound reveals in his prose and poetry, particularly in The Cantos, that the new interpretation of the Bible

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<sup>19</sup>For a discussion of the similarities in Graves and Pound's poetic form, see chapter 5.

would revive the ancient European religion of the Mother-Goddess. According to Pound, the poets, whom Pound equates with magicians, are the priests and representatives of the Mother-Goddess cult, and axiomatically have the right to become the world's potential leaders. Graves, who like Pound was an adherent to the chthonic esoteric tradition, shared Pound's conviction that the poets have the power to revive the cult of the Goddess and help humanity advance to the coming antithetical age. Graves, in "The Anti Poet: Oxford Chair of Poetry. Lecture II", referring to the Muse poets or, for Pound, the Serious poets, expresses his opinion that the Muse poets "will change the present disagreeable climate of human thought" (Oxford Addresses on Poetry 78). According to Graves, the Muse poets or Serious poets, that is, those inspired by the Goddess, "understand what is happening, and what is at stake, even more clearly perhaps than historians and anthropologists, can provide the emotional physic to which the rising generation, many of them painfully caught in the Goddess's net, will take recourse" (Oxford Addresses on Poetry 12-13). Moreover, Graves, in his futuristic utopian novel Seven Days in New Crete, echoing Pound's beliefs, presents the poets as magicians, priests, and leaders in their utopian society, and emphasizes the inter-relatedness of poetry and magic. The persona Ben-Yeshu, who becomes Graves's mouthpiece, asserts that, "if we strengthen the poets and let them become the acknowledged legislators of the new world . . . magic will come into its own again, bringing peace and fertility in its train" (44).

Graves scholars agree on the impact of the Great Goddess on Graves's poetry. Cohen, in Robert Graves, states that "The White Goddess is so closely connected with his poetry that it cannot be considered on its own" (1). Furthermore, Day, in Swifter Than Reason, claims that "the reader who makes no attempt to understand what the Goddess means to Graves cannot hope to understand his best poetry" (xiii). Graves's obsession with the cult of the Great Goddess should not be considered an isolated and eccentric preoccupation in Graves's life, but a natural consequence of his serious investigation into the history of religion and mythology to discover spiritual values.



Carter, in Robert Graves: The Lasting Poetic Achievement, insists that "Graves best served the Muse before he began consciously to wear her colours" (11).

As we have already indicated, Graves's disillusionment with patriarchal Christianity, a religion which was for Graves responsible for the establishment of duality and consequently of disorder and imbalance in the human soul, drove him to the ancient European religion of the Great Goddess, a religion which Graves considered the ultimate solution to the spiritual crisis of modern times, and one that would re-establish the severed spiritual link between humanity and the divine. Graves's fixation with religion and his alienation from the patriarchal god can be discerned in his early poetry, particularly in his 1917 collection Fairies and Fusiliers. In "A Boy in Church" (Fairies and Fusiliers 68-69), Graves expresses his doubts over the influence of Christian ritual on worshippers, and points to the alienation of the Christian Church from nature. The Christian ritual, described as "gabble", does not touch the heart of the young boy who hears the Mass. In fact, the boy "hardly hear[s] the tuneful bubble,/ Not knowing nor much caring whether/ The text is praise or exhortation,/ Prayer or thanksgiving, or damnation". The Church is described as an unnaturally quiescent place, with pews that "never shiver . . . never bend or sway or lurch", an ideal place "For dreams and thinking,/ Lolling and letting reason nod,/ With ugly serious people linking/ Sad prayers to a forgiving God. . . ." The quiescence and rationality of the church, however, are inconsistent with the restlessness and irrationality of nature and the outside world:

Outside [the church] it blows wetter and wetter,  
The tossing trees never stay still  
I shift my elbows to catch better  
The full round sweep of heathered hill  
The tortured corpse bends to and fro  
In silence like a shadow-show.

The nature-god's response to the prayers of the "ugly serious people" is not a blessing, but "a damb blast [which] sets the trees swaying/ With furious zeal like madmen

praying". In "Goliath and David" (Fairies and Fusiliers 11-13), Graves, in retelling the Biblical myth, presents an arrogant and boisterous David who, armed only with his sling and his belief in the "God of Zion", challenges the powerful Goliath. David's faith in God is, however, betrayed since "God's eyes are dim,/ His ears are shut", and Goliath, the Philistine, that is, the representative of the old gods, kills David and "straddles over him".

Graves's thorough investigation into the history of Christianity compelled him to characterize Christian dogma as misleading and to turn his attention to the old gods. In the "Outlaws" (Collected Poems 1975 8), "one of [Graves's] earliest steps on the road to the Goddess" (Carter 119), Graves, in a nightmarish atmosphere, presents the old gods, who were driven underground for about three thousand years, as once again eager to emerge and rule humanity's religious consciousness:

Ambushed in shadow beyond sight  
The outlaws lie.

Old gods, tamed to silence, there  
In the wet woods they lurk,  
Greedy of human stuff to snare  
In nets of murk.

Carter claims that Graves in this poem "goes beyond the psychological to touch upon the metaphysical; for the terrors described here are beyond the power of reason to control" (120). Graves's 'outlaws', like Yeats's 'beast' in "The Second Coming", Crowley's 'Horus' in The Book of the Law, and Pound's "Gods of the winged shoe" in "The Return", are patiently waiting in their death-like slumber for the present primary period to end, so that they can rise, take revenge, and dominate humanity's religious faith once more:

For though creeds whirl away in dust,  
Faith dies and men forget,  
These aged gods of power and lust



Cling to life yet--

Old gods almost dead, malign,  
Starving for unpaid dues:  
Incense and fire, salt, blood and wine  
And a drumming muse.

Graves, in the "Outlaws", approaches the old gods in a diffident manner, groping his way towards the cult of the Great Goddess. Despite the terror and awe the old gods inspire, it seems that Graves is on their side, "acknowledging their past splendour and the fact that they have not yet become entirely extinguished" (Carter 121). Furthermore, according to Cohen, Graves believed that "the old gods have retired, but they will strike back with all the force of nightmare, once darkness has fallen and the poets will be on their side" (21).

The old gods<sup>20</sup> finally merged in Graves's mind into the figure of the Great Goddess. The cult of the Great Goddess, as Graves reveals in "Rhea" (Collected Poems 1975 183) has not been extinguished, but driven underground waiting for the right moment to re-appear in the world. Graves exclaims in "Rhea" that the Goddess

Discrete she lies,

Not dead but entranced, dreamlessly  
With slow breathing, her lips curved  
In a half-smile archaic, her breast bare,  
Hair astream.

In "Knobs and Levers" (Poems 1970-1972 77), Graves declares the loss of the patriarchal God, who is characteristically "shot while running away", and pronounces

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<sup>20</sup>According to Graves, the old gods represent the magical language of poetic myth related to the cult of the Great Goddess. Graves, in The White Goddess, declares: "My thesis [for The White Goddess] is that the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon Goddess, or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age, and that this remains the language of true poetry" (9-10).

God's displacement by the evil principle Mammon or element of usura, which has appropriated the Christian faith, led humanity to a spiritual anarchy, and turned individuals to "Ancillary knobs or levers/ With no Law to revere nor faith to cherish". Moreover, Graves expresses his conviction that this dehumanization and loss of religious faith will inevitably cause "A full-scale break-down implemented/ By famine and disease". Despite the dire consequences induced by Mammon, the end of "Knobs and Levers" is optimistic, since Graves predicts the return of the Great Goddess to the religious consciousness of the people: God died; clearly the Devil must have followed./ But was there not a Goddess too, God's mother? In "The White Goddess" (Collected Poems 1975 157), Graves, the Muse poet, declares his adherence to the Great Goddess. He reveals that the Muse poets' mission is to rebel against the patriarchal spirit, which encourages mediocrity and Apollo's saying 'never exceed'; to disdain the old morality and norms of patriarchal society; and bring forth the Goddess. Graves confesses in "The White Goddess":

All saints revile her, and all sober men  
 Ruled by the God Apollo's golden mean--  
 In scorn of which we sailed to find her  
 In distant regions likeliest to hold her  
 Whom we desired above all things to know,  
 Sister of the mirage and echo.

It was a virtue not to stay,  
 To go our head strong and heroic way  
 Seeking her out at the volcano's head,  
 Among pack ice, or where the track had faded  
 Beyond the cavern of the seven sleepers.

In Graves's "The Return of the Goddess" (Collected Poems 1975 162), it seems that the Goddess of the seven stars is awake and ready to replace patriarchy. The patriarchal god is dead and the whole of nature fearfully invokes the Goddess, who finally appears in the shape of a crane thirsting for revenge, taking humanity violently under her wing once more:



Under your Milky Way  
 And slow-revolving Bear  
 Frogs from the alder thicket pray  
 In terror of your judgement day,  
 Loud with repentance there.

The log they crowned as King  
 Grew sodden, lurched and sank;  
 An owl floats by on silent wing  
 Dark water bubbles from the spring;  
 They invoke you from each bank.

At dawn you shall appear,  
 A gaunt red-legged crane,  
 You whom they know too well for fear,  
 Lunging your beak down like a spear  
 To fetch them home again.

Graves believed that the Muse poets, being the priests and prophets of the Goddess, are responsible for the coming of the cult of the Great Goddess. Graves, in The White Goddess, asserts that the Muse poets acknowledge the Theme, that is, the chthonic esoteric tradition, which, for Graves, includes "the birth, life, death and resurrection of the God of the Waxing Year . . . the God's [of the Waxing Year] losing battle with the God of the Waning Year for love of the capricious and all-powerful Threefold Goddess, their mother, bride and layer-out" (24). Graves identifies the Muse poet with "the God of the Waxing Year and his Muse with the Goddess; the rival is his blood-brother, his other self, his weird" (24). Thus, in a sense, Graves identifies the poet with the king who is sacrificed annually for the well-being of his subjects, that is, with the Waxing God (the first fourteen days of the waxing moon) who has to give way to the Waning God (the fourteen days of the waning moon).

Psychologically speaking, the poet succeeds in bringing forth a new divinity, that is, a new state of consciousness, because he/she succeeds in assimilating the opposites in his/her soul. The poet turns his attention within, communicates with his shadow, his "rival", his "blood brother", his "other self", or, as Crowley would say, with his Holy Guardian Angel; he acknowledges its importance, sacrifices his ego or

personality in favour of his other half, thus liberating himself from the bondage of duality and discovering the state of unity represented by the Mother Goddess. Graves, in "Darien" (Collected Poems 1975 170), celebrates the coming of the divine child, Lucifer, or new divinity, the waning god, the twin brother of the waxing god. Darien is the divine child or child of the mother alone that has been suppressed for about three thousand years by patriarchy. Darien's mother, the Great Goddess, addressing a poet, describes her divine child as:

swifter than wind, with straight and nut-brown hair,  
Tall, slender-shanked, grey-eyed, untameable;  
Never was born, nor ever will be born  
A child to equal my son Darien,  
Guardian of the hid treasures of your world . . .

Graves, in "Darien", makes it clear that it is the poet's sacrifice that brings forth the divine child; in other words, the poet intuitively understands that the assimilation of the opposites, that is, the harmonious alternation of the waning and waxing gods in the human soul, generates the new divinity. The poet or individual who desires to bring forth the new divinity must sacrifice himself/herself, that is, must destroy his/her old personality, accept his/her shadow as an integral part of his/her soul, and thus reach a new state of consciousness, represented in Graves's mythology by the Black Goddess. The poet, in "Darien", who identifies himself with the waxing god, eagerly awaits his sacrifice which will bring forth Darien, the waning god or Lucifer:

I knew then by the trembling of her hands  
For whom that flawless blade would sweep:  
My own oracular head, swung by its hair.  
. . . . 'Sweetheart,' said I, 'strike now, for Darien's sake!'

The birth of the new divinity or divine child of the mother alone in the human soul also constitutes the answer to the problem of the Wheel mentioned in Graves's



The White Goddess. Graves asks in The White Goddess: "Must all things swing round again for ever? Or how can one escape from the Wheel?" (140). Graves, in The White Goddess, implies that the solution lies in the cult of the Great Goddess. In particular, Graves affirms that the individual who desires liberation from the Wheel, that is, desires to dissolve duality and reach Yeats's thirteenth cycle, should undertake an initiation that will lead him/her to the realm of the chthonic goddess Persephone. The initiate in the process of this initiation should not forget "to refuse to drink the water of cypress-shaded Lethe however thirsty one might be, to accept water only from the sacred . . . pool of Persephone, and thus to become immortal Lords of the Dead, excused further Tearings-to-Pieces, Destructions, Resurrections and Rebirths" (140). Thus initiated into the mysteries of the chthonic mother, the individual escapes the Wheel and becomes axiomatically the "acknowledged legislator of the world". Graves, in "Instructions to the Orphic Adept" (Collected Poems 1975 159), describes part of the ceremony of initiation into the mysteries of the Great Goddess at Samothrace. The initiate is warned to avoid drinking from the spring of "forgetfulness", "though all the common rout rush down to drink/ Avoid this spring!", and is encouraged to drink from the spring of "Memory". The initiate, before he is allowed to drink from the pool, declares his allegiance to the cult of the Great Goddess:

Out of the Pure I come, as you may see.  
 I also am of your thrice-fold Queen of Samothrace;  
 Have made full quittance for my deeds of blood,  
 Have been by her invested in sea-purple,  
 And like a kid have fallen into milk.  
 Give me to drink, now I am parched with thirst,  
 Give me to drink!

Furthermore, the initiate realizes at this stage that the mysteries of the Goddess represent a way "out of the weary wheel, the circling years,/ To that still, spokeless

wheel:--Persephone". Once the initiate drinks from the pool of memory and reasserts his/her link with the Great Goddess, then he/she becomes one of the

. . . lords of the uninitiated  
 Twittering ghosts, Hell's countless populace--  
 To become heroes, knights upon swift horses,  
 Pronouncing oracles from tall white tombs  
 By the nymphs tended.

### **Graves and the New Faculty**

Once the poet becomes an initiate, that is, after having successfully assimilated the opposites in his/her soul, thus resolving the problem of duality and the Wheel, then he/she is entitled to lead humanity to a new age. Graves, in "The Bible in Europe", commenting on the revolutionary character of students, observes that "student riots all over the world seem symptomatic of an approaching change in the modern way of life, . . . [student riots] are a natural reaction against the growing control of education by the political machine, big business, and a body of docile scientists who conduct experiments on lines laid down by their directors" (Difficult Questions Easy Answers 18). Graves believed like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, that the new age would be antithetical in character, would be dominated by the cult of the Great Goddess, and would engender a new faculty in human consciousness. According to Graves, the new faculty pertains to the assimilation of the opposites in the human psyche. Once the individual accepts what Graves calls the Theme or chthonic esoteric tradition (that is, the dual state of his/her consciousness) and acknowledges the importance of his/her subconscious power (the twin brother of the god of the waxing year--the waning god or Lucifer or child of the mother alone), then the individual will expand his/her consciousness to embrace a new state in which the twin sons of the Goddess alternate harmoniously, bringing peace and unity in the microcosm and macrocosm.



This new state of consciousness,<sup>21</sup> represented in Graves's mythology by the Black Goddess, brings forth the new faculty which Graves associates with the human genius and which endows the individual with supernatural powers.<sup>22</sup> Graves, in "Genius", affirms that

genius is capable of some primitive thought-level of thinking in the fourth and fifth dimensions. In the fourth dimension one can explore the interior of a sealed chamber without breaching its walls. In the fifth, one is no longer bound by time but can see things happening in the past or future as easily as, for instance, if seated at ease in an aeroplane flying faster than clock time, one can watch the setting sun slowly rise again above the sea-horizon. One is also, it seems, capable of communing with other minds in the past, present, or future. (Difficult Questions, Easy Answers 12)

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<sup>21</sup>Colin Wilson, in his speech in Esalon Institute in California, classifies human consciousness into seven states: Dreams constitute the first state; the second state comes right after one wakes up, when the mind is "a playing mirror"; the third state is characterized by an "inner collapse of meaning", the state of "nausea", in which one depends only on the external environment; the fourth state is ordinary consciousness, a state at whose upper end one experiences peak experiences; the fifth state is "Spring morning or holiday consciousness"; the sixth state is the permanized state of "Spring morning or holiday consciousness"; and the seventh state, in which the new faculty is activated, is what Wilson calls Faculty X, in which "space and time vanish" ("New Pathways to Psychology" September 16, 1990). Wilson, who is not an "over-credulous" occultist as Seymour-Smith believes (561), has dealt extensively with the Occult and with the history of human consciousness. In The Occult, Wilson deals exclusively with the new faculty or Faculty X, which he defines as "that latent power that human beings possess *to reach beyond the present* [Wilson's italics] . . . it is the power to grasp reality, and it unites, the two halves of man's mind, conscious and subconscious" (59). Moreover, Wilson asserts that Faculty X is "an ordinary potentiality of consciousness. And it should be clear . . . that it is the key not only to so-called occult experience, but to the whole future evolution of the human race" (62). Wilson's remark that Faculty X is a product of the assimilation of the opposites echoes Graves's conviction about the fifth dimension, a heightened state of consciousness in which the poet, through a poetic trance, goes beyond the conscious and subconscious mind and gains "access not only to the primitive emotions and thoughts which lie stored in his childhood memory but to all his subsequent experiences, emotional and intellectual" ("The Poet in a Valley of Dry Bones" in Mammon and the Black Goddess 88-89).

<sup>22</sup>Graves, in his letters addressed to his Muses, implies that a telepathic communication existed between him and his Muses (Seymour-Smith 523-528). Moreover, according to his testimony in Goodbye To All That, Graves had experienced a number of premonitions during World War I; one premonition saved Graves from certain death.

It seems that Graves as a poet had personally experienced this new faculty, as evidenced in his The White Goddess, a work which Graves considered of supernatural origin. Graves, in "The White Goddess: A Talk for the Y.M.H.A. Centre", commenting on the genesis of The White Goddess, claims that the book was written in a heightened state of consciousness, implying that he unintentionally became a vessel, prophet, or mouthpiece of the Goddess. Furthermore, in the same speech, Graves narrates the strange coincidences<sup>23</sup> which followed before and after the publication of the book, coincidences which convinced him that the creation of The White Goddess was a deliberate act of the Great Goddess herself. Graves maintains that:

In 1944, at a Devonshire village called Galmpton, I was working against time on a historical novel about the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece, when *a sudden overwhelming obsession interrupted me* [my italics]. It took the form of an unsolicited enlightenment on a subject I knew almost nothing of. . . . Within three weeks, I had written a seventy-thousand word book about the ancient Mediterranean Moon-Goddess. . . . The enlightenment began one morning while I was re-reading Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of The Mabinogion, . . . I suddenly knew (don't ask me how) that the lines of the poem (The Song of Taliesin) which has always been dismissed as deliberate nonsense, formed a series of early mediaeval riddles, and that I knew the answers to them all. (Steps 86-87)

Graves, commenting on the history of The White Goddess's publication, attests that the first publisher who

could not recommend this unusual book to his partners, because of the expense . . . died of heart failure within the month. The second wrote very discourteously. . . . He died soon afterwards. The third T. S. Eliot, wrote that it must be published at all costs. . . . But I beg you not to

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<sup>23</sup>Graves, in The White Goddess, commenting on the series of synchronicities that happened in his life, reveals his predisposition to the new faculty. Graves affirms that "chains of more-than-coincidence occur so often in my life that, if I am forbidden to call them supernatural hauntings, let me call them a habit. Not that I like the word 'supernatural'; I find these happenings natural enough, though superlatively unscientific" (490).



laugh yet! Wait! I beg you not to laugh, unless you can explain just why the second publisher should have dressed himself up in a woman's panties and bra one afternoon and hanged himself from a tree in his garden. Was that a blind act of God, or was it a calculated act of the Goddess. I leave the answer to you; all I know is that it seemed to me natural enough in its horrid way. (Steps 105) \_

In addition to the alleged supernatural origin of Graves's The White Goddess, which resembles strongly the creation of Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, and to some degree Pound's The Cantos, another demonstration of the new faculty is evidenced in Graves's autobiographical short story, "The Abominable Mr Gunn". In this story Graves describes a mystical experience he once had as a school boy, an experience which demonstrates his new faculty or faculty of certainty, a faculty which closely resembles that which Pound announces in Pavannes and Divagations. This faculty enables the individual to side-step the rational processes of the mind and reach the answer to a problem through an intuitive jump. Graves narrates that as a school boy, he had once "received a sudden celestial illumination":

It occurred to me that I knew everything. I remember letting my mind range rapidly over all its familiar subjects of knowledge, only to find that this was no foolish fancy. I did know everything. To be plain: though conscious of having come less than a third of the way along the path of formal education, and being weak in mathematics, shaky in Greek grammar, and hazy about English history, I nevertheless held the key of truth in my hand, and could use it to open the lock of any door. Mine was no religious or philosophical theory, but a simple method of looking sideways at disorderly facts so as to make perfect sense of them. (Collected Short Stories 91)

Furthermore, Graves, echoing Pound's understanding of the new faculty, explains that, at the time, he conceived of this experience as "a sudden infantile awareness of the power of intuition, the supra-logic that cuts out all routine processes of thought and leaps straight from problem to answer" (Collected Short Stories 92). Wilson, in Beyond the Occult, commenting on Graves's "celestial illumination" described in "The Abominable Mr Gunn", reflects on the paranormal nature of Graves's experience

and hints at humanity's supernatural powers, located in the right<sup>24</sup> hemisphere of the brain or subconscious mind:

Graves's illumination concerned the right brain, or the workings of intuition. But his insight seems to contradict our normal assumption that the right brain is simply a natural counterpart of the left, complementing its powers of logical analysis with an ability to perceive patterns. Graves's comment that the insight was of 'a sudden infantile awareness of the power of intuition, the supra-logic that cuts out all routine processes of thought and leaps straight from problem to answer', means that he is claiming that its powers go far beyond mere 'pattern-perception' and come much closer to what we would call 'occult' or paranormal. (55)

Thus, Graves, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, can be considered a pioneer poet of the new antithetical age. He believed in the powers of humanity and sought to bring forth the hidden god, that is, the outcome of the assimilation of the conscious and subconscious powers in the human psyche, the new divinity or divine child or child of the mother alone or Gnostic Christ, who lies within the human soul and constitutes its immortal principle.

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<sup>24</sup>In Graves's story "The Abominable Mr Gunn", another demonstration of the powers of the new faculty is the case of Graves's fellow pupil, Smiley, a mathematic's prodigy who is intimidated by the master of the school, Mr Gunn. Smiley represents the powers of the right hemisphere of the brain, while Mr Gunn represents the analytical powers of the left hemisphere.



## Chapter 5

### Towards an Understanding of a New Poetic Occult Form

#### Introduction

Geoffrey Bullough points out in The Trend of Modern Poetry that "changes in poetic technique are due not merely to individual genius in contact with a resistant medium, but also to changes in the social and intellectual environment" (1). The end of the nineteenth century marks the emergence of depth psychology or the psychology of the unconscious. In 1898, Freud and Breuer's demonstrations of free association and dream analysis as techniques of psychological therapy paved the way to the dark side of the human psyche. Furthermore, Jung's revelation that the unconscious produces magical and religious symbols rising out of a "collective unconscious" offered us another perspective on the vast potential of the human consciousness and provided evidence for the reality of humanity's inner world.

In addition to depth psychology, Nietzsche's existentialism, with its emphasis on human will, and von Hartmann's philosophy, expressed in The Philosophy of the Unconscious and The Religion of the Future, with its underlying idea that the world is controlled by unconscious will, played a crucial role in the struggle against the morals of the old primary period, the abstraction of traditional philosophy, as well as in the shaping of the poetic mind.

Moreover, the teachings of the esoteric tradition, which experienced a renaissance in the late nineteenth century with the emergence of the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, fuelled the messianic and apocalyptic spirit of the late nineteenth century, which eventually led to the serious religious questioning of the age. Christianity was vehemently attacked and questioned by the initiated-intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century, who at the same time were trying to formulate a new religious creed that would satisfy the religious needs of the people.

Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, steeped in the teachings of the esoteric tradition, were aware of the schism in the soul and in western civilization, and sought to achieve spiritual integration through their poetry. To achieve this end they turned inwards to the depths of the psyche and managed to heal the fragmentary state of their soul. Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, aware of living in a transitional period during which a new antithetical age was fast approaching to replace the old patriarchal primary one, and conscious of the fact that Christianity could no longer satisfy the religious instincts of the people, considered themselves apostles of the new age and sought to proclaim through their works a new divinity that would dominate the new age and lead humanity out of the spiritual impasse created by the old faith. Subsequently, the four poets felt the need to produce religious poetry which would fulfil the spiritual needs of the people.

Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves expressed through their poetry the coming of the new age, but more significantly, they also tried to adapt the poetry to meet the demands of the new antithetical age. In applying their esoteric knowledge to poetics, they experimented with forms and techniques that would reflect and convey the spirit of the new age. Hartmann, in The Religion of the Future (1886), commenting on the function and the form of future art, remarks that "a Work of Art . . . begins to really deserve the name only when its external form is merely the symbol of a mystery opening an infinite world to the person who meditates on it and to the presentiments of the heart, a world in which each man finds the meaning which suits him without being able to accuse others of error" (76).

Considering themselves priest-magicians of the new age, the four poets conceived of poetry as a ritual of the new religion which would lead the reader to a revelation or enlightenment. They explored the soul, inner world, or subconscious to discover the way inwards to the roots of humanity and establish a common language among people. Language, however, communicates the experiences of the conscious state as evidenced by the five senses, and does not express and communicate



messages to and from the subconscious. Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, believed in a sense that history was a conspiracy of the subconscious, that life itself is the manifestation of divine will. It was the question then of what poetic form would enable them to get in touch with that divine will or subconscious. The four poets understood the need to develop new forms and techniques which would enable them to reach the subconscious. They believed that contact with the collective unconscious occurs with a sudden revelation which brings enlightenment or palingenesis to the poet or the reader's consciousness. The collective unconscious thus is the state that the individual experiences through ecstasy, trance or reverie, a state identified with the divine source. The poem becomes the gateway to the collective unconscious. The poet uses free verse, myth, symbol, image, rhythm in order to "transform" the reader's consciousness, that is, to create a "trance", ecstasy, reverie, or vortex that would "form" the consciousness of the reader and carry him/her away to the whirl of the subconscious. Myth, symbol, and image, charged by the priest-magician-poet's desire, function as catalysts which initiate the poet and the reader to the collective unconscious, an initiation which allows the poet and reader to tap the wells of memory and establish a continuity among the past, present, and future. It is the remembrance of things past which provides the whole and which establishes communion with the inner hidden god. The four poets, for the most part independently of each other, arrived at the idea that in the new age it would be possible for poetry, through imagination and intuitive poetic insight, to lead humanity to the ultimate truth, that is, to redeem humanity from the faithlessness of the present era and restore the balance in the human soul.

This chapter will demonstrate that the poetry of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves acquires primarily a religious character; that the four poets, in order to go beyond ordinary human consciousness and explore the essence of the inner world, created new occult poetic forms. Reflecting an Einsteinian perception of the universe and the discoveries of depth psychology, these new forms become relative and poetic

language is transformed into a web of interlinked, charged talismanic images or symbols which ultimately produce ecstasy or reverie in the reader. The associations that are released by this trance-like state direct the reader to the depths of memory or collective unconscious, an encounter which evokes a feeling of accomplished unity with the divine.

### **Yeats and the Evocation of the Memory of Nature**

Yeats was one of the first modern poets to capture in his poetry the revolutionary spirit of the new antithetical age. Yeats rebelled against the literary traditions of his contemporary world and aspired to discover the poetic tradition that had its roots in the depths of the psyche or subconscious as well as in the glorious antithetical past of human history. As Yeats remarks in *Dublin Daily Express* (1899), poetry is "a revelation of a hidden life" and not necessarily "a criticism of life" (qtd. in MacNeice, 32). "In reaction against everything Victorian" (Yeats, "Modern Poetry" 494), Yeats and his fellow poets<sup>1</sup> of the Tragic Generation established the Rhymers Club. Adopting Pater's aestheticism, the Rhymers, conscious of living in "an age of transition" (Yeats, *Autobiography* 182), "wished to express life at its intense moments, these moments that are brief because of their intensity" (Yeats, "Modern Poetry" 494), and sought to create a "pure", lyric, emotive, and evocative poetry, free of Victorian rhetoric and moral or didactic fervour. The purpose of this poetry was to "rediscover in verse the syntax of impulsive common life" (Yeats, *Autobiography* 182), and "to discover immortal moods in mortal desires, an undecaying hope in our trivial ambitions, a divine love in sexual passion" (Yeats, "The Moods" 125).

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<sup>1</sup>According to Yeats's autobiography, other members of the Rhymers Club were: Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Victor plarr, Ernest Radford, John Davidson, Richard de Gallienne, T. W. Rollerston, Selwyn Image, Edwin Ellis, John Todhunter, Arthur Symons, Herbert Horne, William Watson, Francis Thompson, and Oscar Wilde.



Alienated from the Christian faith, yet a very religious man (Yeats, Autobiography 71), Yeats, as well as his fellow Rhymers, sought to create "a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition" (Yeats, Autobiography 71). For Yeats and his fellow Rhymers poetic imagination is the source of the new religion of the heart that will emerge in the world. Free from the burden of the Victorian poetic tradition, the new poetry "becomes itself a kind of religion, with all the duties and responsibilities of the sacred ritual" (Symons 5).

Symons introduced Yeats to the works of the French Symbolists Verlaine and Mallarme. However, even before his contact with the French Symbolists, Yeats was well aware of the function and importance of symbolism in poetry. Ellmann inaccurately states that Yeats "had evolved already a symbology which, while backed by occult ideas, did not depend upon them, and he was endeavouring to give the new Irish literary movement a symbolic direction" (qtd. in Symons xi). However, Yeats's symbology depends exclusively on his occult ideas. In his essay on "Magic", Yeats, who considers the poet the successor of the magician (41), expresses his belief in "the practice and philosophy of what we [Yeats and his fellow initiates of the Golden Dawn] have agreed to call magic" (28), and also his belief in the three axioms which constitute "the foundations of nearly all magical practices" (28):

1. The borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
  2. The borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.
  3. That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.
- ("Magic" 28)

Thus, the poet-magician, according to Yeats, has the power to reach, through the manipulation of magically-charged symbols, the anima mundi, collective unconscious, or memory of Nature, and initiate a kind of reverie or trance which would eventually lead the reader and the poet to a revelation, enlightenment, or, in

other words, to unity of being, and also to communication with the Holy Guardian Angel or divine will. This trance-like state or reverie, which enables the mind to communicate by means of symbols with the collective unconscious, can be initiated by rhythm. According to Yeats's occult methodology, rhythm which has the power of an occult meditative mantra, in collaboration with rhyme, releases the conscious grip on human consciousness, allowing the subconscious to come closer to the surface, and creates a hypnagogic state suitable for the emergence of the archetypal symbols from the depths of the human psyche, which facilitates the communication between the individual and its divine source. Yeats, in "the Symbolism of Poetry", commenting on rhythm, asserts that its purpose is "to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment which we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols" (159); similarly, Yeats proclaims in "The Symbolism of Poetry" that "in the making and in the understanding of a work of art, and the more easily if it is full of patterns and symbols and music, we are lured to the threshold of sleep, and it may be far beyond it, without knowing that we have ever set our feet upon the steps of horn or of ivory" (160). In "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry", Yeats, commenting on the significance of symbols in poetry and on their ability to form a bridge between the conscious and the subconscious state, maintains that "it is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless meanings besides the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement, into the abundance and depth of Nature" (87).

The ancient symbols, along with the magical correspondences<sup>2</sup> or associations which they release, were for Yeats capable of producing a trance or reverie that could

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<sup>2</sup>To a magically-trained mind, like Yeats's, an image or symbol could release many associations or magical correspondences; for instance, the symbol or image of a house



transport his consciousness back to the archetypal realm of the subconscious. In his autobiography, Yeats describes in detail his practice with Tattwa<sup>3</sup> symbols which enabled him "to start reverie" (155), and to gain entrance to or establish communication with the collective unconscious. Yeats, in his autobiography, seems to be convinced that "it was the symbol itself, or, at any rate, not my conscious intention that produced the effect, for if I made an error and told someone to gaze at the wrong symbol--they were painted upon cards--the vision would be suggested by the symbol, not by my thought, or two visions would appear side by side, one from the symbol and one from my thought" (156). Similarly, Yeats insists in his autobiography that it was through the use of Cabalistic Tattwa symbols that he came "face to face with the Anima Mundi described by Platonic philosophy, and more especially in modern times by Henry More, which has a memory independent of embodied individual memory, though they constantly enrich it with their images and their thoughts" (158). As a poet-magician, Yeats, applying his esoteric knowledge to poetic art, probably desired to make the reader experience the apocalyptic visions that he had experienced himself while practising with the Tattwa symbols; in other words, Yeats wanted to make the reader experience a reverie or trance that would make him/her feel the archetypal world of the anima mundi or racial memory. Craig, in Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry, observes that the purpose of the reverie in Yeats's poetics is "the recovery of memory . . . and yet it is an aim that can only be fulfilled on the condition that one's memory is suited to the possibility of sustained

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corresponds to the second Hebrew letter Beth, to the Juggler in the Tarot, to the Scarlet colour, to Mercury, to Thoth in Egyptian mythology, to Hermes in Greek, to Odin in Norse etc. Regardie, in The Golden Dawn, maintains that "one of the essentials of preliminary work is the committing to memory of the important correspondences and attributions" (45). For further information on magical correspondences, see Crowley's cabalistic dictionary of ceremonial magic 777.

<sup>3</sup>For Yeats's use of Tattwa symbols, see his autobiography pp. 155-160. For the actual Golden dawn instructions on Tattwa symbol use, see Regardie's The Original Account of the Teachings, Rites, and Ceremonies of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (456-466).

associational meditation" (42). Furthermore, Craig demonstrates that memory is understood by Yeats as "the condition in which the receiving mind can generate associations most easily and fully" (41). The associations, which are released during the state of reverie, spring from the reader's subconscious mind and start a chain reaction which culminates in the unravelling of the Great Memory itself. Craig suggests that Yeats, as well as Pound and Eliot, was "working within an associationist framework which made memory the central faculty in aesthetic experience" (67).

The activation of memory is important to the function of poetry because it determines to what degree the poet has succeeded in rousing the reader's interest in what the writer wants to convey. Craig maintains that

memory is . . . the necessary requirement of the audience as well as the artist, for without memory the reader cannot provide the multitude of associations that creates, from a single image, a complete world. . . . The real poem . . . is not the poem as it is on the page, but the poem on the page in conjunction with the reader's associations. . . . Unless the poet manages . . . to drive the reader back into his own memory, he has failed to create an effective work of art. (67)

Moreover, in another way, the poet who creates a successful work of art manages, temporarily at least, to achieve unity of being<sup>4</sup> in the reader's consciousness and bring him/her in contact with the divine will, that is, to elevate the consciousness of the reader to a divine level. The Great Memory or Anima Mundi that Yeats refers to corresponds to the Platonic world of Ideas which exists in another realm separately from the phenomenal world. The mission of the poet-priest-magician is to gradually initiate the reader to the remembrance of the lost unity of the soul, back to the archetypal world of Ideas. Yates, expounding Plato's argument in Phaedrus concerning the "true function of rhetoric", asserts that for Plato the "knowledge of the truth and of the soul consists in remembering, in the recollection of the Ideas once

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<sup>4</sup>Yates declares in The Art of Memory that "the manipulation of images in memory must always to some extent involve the psyche as a whole" (11).



seen by all souls of which all earthly things are confused copies. All knowledge and all learning are an attempt to recollect the reality, the collecting into a unity of the many perceptions of the senses through their correspondences with the realities" (The Art of Memory 51).

The use of talismanic, magically-charged images and symbols,<sup>5</sup> which leads to the release of associations and to the activation of memory, presupposes "a magically activated imagination"<sup>6</sup> (Yates, The Art of Memory 161). Bearing in mind the essential occult maxim that energy follows thought, we assume that creative imagination<sup>7</sup> or the art of visualization is important to the poet-magician who imprints the desired, willed image or symbol on to the subconscious mind where it achieves a separate reality. Conscious of the power of his creative imagination, Yeats rightfully wonders in "The Man and the Echo", to what degree he was responsible for the Easter Rising: "Did that play of mine send out/ Certain men the English shot?" (337).

"Sailing to Byzantium", the culmination of The Tower poems, is indicative of the way that Yeats utilizes his occult knowledge to create a poetic form that enables him to explore new ways of communicating with his inner self, and also to create new metaphors which when introduced to the reader's consciousness enable the latter to share the poet's apocalyptic experience and help the reader discover new ways of

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<sup>5</sup>Images and symbols charged with power and which act as Yates suggests "as conveyors of cosmic powers into the psyche" (The Art of Memory 210).

<sup>6</sup>Yates maintains in The Art of Memory that "the religion of Love and Magic is based on the power of the Imagination, and on the Art of Imagery throughout which the Magus attempts to grasp, and to hold within, the universe in all its ever changing forms, through images passing the one into the other in intricate associative orders, reflecting the ever changing movements of the heavens, charged with emotional affects, unifying, forever attempting to unify, to reflect the great *monas* of the world in its image, the mind of man" (255).

<sup>7</sup>An example of the power of Yeats's creative imagination and its influence on other people's minds is given by Yeats in his essay "Magic". Yeats, in one of his visits to Mathers and his wife in Paris, while passing the housemaid in the street, visualized his arm in a sling. When he returned home, Mathers told him that he was actually seen by the servant with his arm in a sling. Yeats's explanation is that he "had cast [his] imagination so strongly upon the servant that she had seen it, and with what had appeared to be more than the mind's eye" (37).

learning about himself/herself. The form of "Sailing to Byzantium", the ottava rima (eight-line iambic stanzas, rhyming abababcc), together with its strong lilting musical rhythm, has a powerful, meditative, incantatory effect on the reader's mind. This rhyme scheme and the rhythm lull the conscious mind and bring the subconscious closer to the surface. When the filters of the conscious mind release their grip on the human consciousness, the subconscious becomes more susceptible to the talismanic images of the poem. In this highly charged, emotive atmosphere, the reader conceives in his/her imagination two conflicting symbols: "That . . . country" becomes the symbol of the physical, phenomenal world, and Byzantium, which becomes the symbol of the eternal, timeless world of pure intellect, the archetypal world of Ideas. The first stanza of the poem is inundated with sensual images whose associations direct the mind of the reader to the physical world. Moreover, the musical properties of the first stanza, that is, Yeats's use of rhythm and alliteration, reflects the sensual, seductive music of the physical world. In the second stanza there are images of human decay; humanity is compared to a scarecrow, revealing thus intimations of mortality. In the last two stanzas, the sensual, physical music of the phenomenal world is contrasted to its correspondent celestial, spiritual music of Byzantium. The song of the physical world becomes a prayer and an incantation that the poet addresses to the secret chiefs in order to become initiated into the eternal world of Ideas. Along with the persona, the reader is carried away by the associations which are released by the two master symbols of the poem, and completes the journey from the fragile, forlorn world of the present to the glorious past of Byzantine civilization. As Craig asserts, "it is the forward movement of the poem, a song in time, towards an image that is apparently beyond time, as though sculpted, but releasing the reader's mind into an associative reverie that will carry him far into the past that constitutes the essential structure of Yeats's poetic" (87). The physical world and the world of Ideas unite in the soul of the persona and the reader, and unity of being, which enables them to become masters of the physical and the eternal world and in a way transcend them



both, is achieved. In the last stanza the form of the golden bird reminds the reader of the natural world, while the song of the golden bird reminds the reader of time. In the form of a golden bird, the speaker will sing of time but not be tyrannized by it.

### **Crowley and the Exaltation of the Mind in Divine Ecstasy**

Crowley, Yeats's fellow poet-magician and brother in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, is remembered today as one of the greatest occultists of the twentieth century. This status, however, has eclipsed his contribution to poetry which is generally underestimated by his critics and biographers. In 1898, the year of his initiation into the Golden Dawn, Crowley published seven collections of poetry. The reviews of Crowley's early poetry were encouraging and favourable, despite its striking occult and anti-Christian tint. G. K. Chesterton, in an essay in the Daily News, June 18, 1901, commemorates the poetic genius of the young poet and remarks that "Mr Crowley is a strong and genuine poet, and we have little doubt that he will work up from his appreciation of the Temple of Osiris to that loftier and wider work of the human imagination, the appreciation of the Brixton Chapel" (qtd. in P. R. Stephensen 45). A reviewer in The Nation, in an essay titled "Recent Verse: 'The Soul of Osiris'" (1901), notes that "no one who reads such poems as these [those in The Soul of Osiris] . . . can doubt that this poet is authentic and will reveal to the world much new beauty. Unless his eye be dazzled and his brain distraught by the raptures of mysticism" (153). The quality of Crowley's verse has also been exalted by Stephensen, who declares Crowley a master of poetry and a pioneer in the creation of a new poetic tradition:

Aleister Crowley was attempting, and it does not even matter if he failed, to formulate a poetic consciousness of the human Universal. Poetry was petering out into triviality, indeed the whole Nation was petering out spiritually; and Crowley had the courage to tackle his poet's job of re-integration. He will yet be honoured for this courage, even if his achievement be condemned. He belonged to no schools or coteries; he was romantic and wild and boisterous when all others were

becoming so 'refined' that they almost vanished in transparency. No one could suggest seriously that poets like Dowson, and [Thomas] Middleton, and Yeats, will ever be placed in the great succession of English poets who worked cosmically--the major poets who worked widely on the whole human canvas! Shakespeare, and Blake, and Milton, and Shelley, and Swinburne with all their faults; even Browning. After Swinburne and Browning, is there one poet, to our day, who has worked on that Grand Plan of poetry which shirks nothing human? In *scope*, in cosmic self-definition, in the Grand Manner unashamed--only Aleister Crowley! (100-101)

Even though Stephensen over-exaggerates Crowley's poetic status and erroneously disregards Yeats's great contribution to the "Grand Plan of poetry", he correctly points out that Crowley, like Yeats, felt the need to create a new poetic form that would suit the demands of the new antithetical age. The religious element in Crowley's poetry is very strong; it seems that Crowley, like Yeats, felt the need to create poetry that would satisfy religious instincts that Christianity could not. Poetry, for Crowley, becomes the ritual of the new religion, and the poet becomes the priest-magician who undertakes the position of hierophant held in the chthonic mysteries of antiquities, that is, to initiate the reader-mystes into the reality of his/her inner world, to lead the reader to enlightenment or gnosis, and to make him/her aware of the existence of the Gnostic Christ that exists within. In Crowley's essay "Eleusis", written in 1907 as an epilogue to his Collected Works, the hierophant or poet-magician expresses his desire to initiate the people in the mysteries of Eleusis:

We are the poets! We are the children of wood and stream, of mist and mountain, of sun and wind! We adore the moon and the stars. . . . Under the stars I go forth, my brothers, and drink of that lustral dew; I will return, my brothers, when I have seen God face to face, and read within those eternal eyes the secret that shall make you free. Then will I choose you and test you and instruct you in the Mysteries of Eleusis, oh you brave hearts and cool eyes, and trembling lips! I will put a live coal upon your lips, and flowers upon your eyes, and a sword in your hearts, and ye also shall see God face to face. Thus shall we give back its youth to the world, for like tongues of triple flame we shall brood upon the Great deep--Hail unto the Lords of the Groves of Eleusis! (qtd. in Fuller 327)



For Crowley, poetry was inextricably connected with magic, and he was convinced, like Yeats, that poetry would form the ritual of the new religion. Furthermore, Crowley shared Yeats and Pound's belief that poetry could also be used as a means of initiation, as a catalyst that could induce in the reader a reverie, trance, or ecstasy, a state that could make the reader transcend his/her ordinary consciousness to a new divine state. In his autobiography, Crowley defines the poem as "a series of words so arranged that the combination of meaning, rhythm, time produces the definitely magical effect of exalting the soul to divine ecstasy" (345). Divine ecstasy, magical exultation, or Yeats's reverie is an important step in the reader's initiation for it unlocks the gate to the subconscious and enables the reader to communicate, as Crowley would say, with his/her Holy Guardian Angel and discover his/her true will.

In Olla, Crowley notes that "poetry is the geyser of the Unconscious" (11), and declares that his "object is to proclaim the duty of every poet; and this is:--to reveal the Godhead in every man and woman through the expression of each one's rapture at the ecstatic moment of Union with that Godhead; thereby to show as just and perfect every soul that is" (13). Thus, poetry becomes an incantation and an invocation whose objective is to bring the reader in touch with the collective unconscious and make the reader remember<sup>8</sup> the archetypal truth hidden within the soul. In Liber Aleph, Crowley asserts that "there is That within thee which remembereth Truth, and is ready to communicate the same unto thee when thou hast wit to evoke it from the Adytum and sanctuary of thy Being" (113). Similarly, in one of the "Rites of Eleusis" (Crowley's existential and esoteric drama), the Rite of Jupiter, Crowley, in his characteristic evocative style exclaims:

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<sup>8</sup>The importance of the art of magical memory was recognised by Crowley, who considered the activation of memory a prerequisite for the discovery of the individual's true will. In Little Essays toward Truth, Crowley points out that memory is "the mortar of the architecture of the mind. . . . The normal development of the memory in Time leads to a better understanding of the True Will of the individual" (21).

I rather will exalt the soul  
 Of men to loftier height,  
 And kindle at a livelier coal  
 The subtler soul of light.  
 From these soft splendours of a dream  
 I turn, and seek the Self supreme. (100)

Crowley, like Yeats and Pound, uses in his poetry magically charged images and symbols which guide the reader to a state of ecstasy induced by the associations or correspondences that they provoke in the reader's consciousness. In Magick Without Tears, Crowley explicitly affirms that "most of my Talismans, like my Invocations, have been poems" (158). In addition to the magically charged symbols which release associations, Crowley, like Yeats, recognized the importance of rhythm, rhyme, and the musical properties of the poem in creating a hypnotic-meditative effect on the reader's consciousness which would, in its term, induce the desired state of ecstasy. An invocative stanza from the Rite of Luna, one of the seven "Rites of Eleusis", provides a typical example:

Crown Her, O crown Her with stars as with flowers for a virginal gaud!  
 Crown Her, O crown Her with Light and the flame of the down-  
 rushing sword!  
 Crown Her, O crown Her with Love for maiden and mother and wife!  
 Hail unto Isis! Hail! For She is the Lady of Life  
 Isis Crowned! (Rites of Eleusis 194)

Keith Richmond, in his introduction to Crowley's The Rites of Eleusis, maintains that Crowley in this work, "proposed to bring down some spark of divine fire and hopefully unleash it amongst the players and audience, igniting within them a genuine state of religious ecstasy. The idea was certainly a bold and innovative one, both from occult and dramatic perspectives and well in tune with his concept of revitalizing religion . . . [and] of invoking religious ecstasy" (21). Symonds, in his biography on Crowley, notes that "the advertised aim of the rites was to induce in the audience a state of religious ecstasy" (The King of the Shadow Realm 132). Brown, in "Aleister



Crowley's Rites of Eleusis", indirectly refers to Crowley's intention of initiating his audience into a new state of consciousness, and summarizes sufficiently Crowley's technique to achieve that end. According to Brown,

The Rites of Eleusis represent an approach toward a theatre of altered consciousness whose audience and actors alike 'rise on the astral planes' toward ecstasies induced through shifting aesthetic perceptions. . . . In the Rites of Eleusis, Aleister Crowley attempted to induce in an audience altered mind states through an aesthetic assault on the senses. He used rhythmic music, repetitive prayers, and hypnotic poetry to lull the mind through the sense of hearing. He used dim light, veiled action, and flickering flames to fatigue the sense of sight. He used incense and perfumes to overload the sense of smell. He used possession dance to enact in physical space the kinesthetic potential of the audience's passive trance. He used psychoactive drugs to alter body chemistry and shift consciousness" (The Drama Review 26).

Furthermore, Crowley, in order to further achieve his object of inducing an ecstasy in the audience and make them experience a palingenetic effect, utilizes the technique of presenting the seven rites, which constitute the Rites of Eleusis, each one separately during seven consecutive Wednesday evenings. Each rite is dominated by a specific planet god, and slowly builds towards the climax which comes at the seventh rite, the Rite of Luna, when Pan, at the end of his invocation to Artemis, tears the veil of illusion, and presents the god of the new age, Horus, the crowned and conquering child, the child of the Great Goddess,<sup>9</sup> who represents humanity's eternal and divine element. The planet god who dominates each rite releases a multitude of associations or magical correspondences intentionally meant to function as catalysts that induce the trance or reverie and activate magical memory. According to Brown,

One of Crowley's main reasons for choosing the deities associated with the days of the week for his drama was that the kabbalistic correspondences of color, form, idea, aroma, etc., for them were

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<sup>9</sup>Crowley in his synopsis of the Rites of Eleusis affirms that the Great Goddess is also known as "Isis and Mary, Ishtar and Bhavani, Artemis and Diana" (Rites of Eleusis 31).

already so well worked out. It is this system of correspondences--set forth in the esoteric Hebraic tradition of secret knowledge and used in the rituals of occult societies such as the Golden Dawn--that determined such features of the drama's staging as the colors of costumes and lights, the props employed, the perfumes used, the sacred names intoned, and the placement of the performers in the acting space. ("Aleister Crowley's Rites of Eleusis" 12)

Moreover, Crowley, in an article in The Bystander, commenting on the use of magical correspondences and their application to the Rites of Eleusis, states:

Let us put ourselves in the position of the dramatist. Working on tradition . . . we find Saturn as a black, melancholy God, the devourer of his children. Ideas of Night, Death, Black hellebore, Lead, Cypress, Tombs, Deadly Nightshade. All these things have a necessary connection with Saturn. . . . The first condition of this rite is, then, to make the temple a kind of symbolic representation of the sphere of Saturn. So the representative of Saturn wears the Black Robe. The time is declared to be midnight. If the brethren are fed, it is 'on the corpses of their children' . . . . If they drink, it is 'Poppyheads infused with blood'--symbols of sleep and death. . . . It is then the primitive darkness of humanity that is represented in this ritual. (qtd. in Brown, "Aleister Crowley's Rites of Eleusis" 12)

The style that Crowley appropriates in the Rites of Eleusis as well as in most of his poetry is clearly Swinburnian.<sup>10</sup> In his autobiography, Crowley admits that he is "primarily a lyric poet. My deepest natural tendency is to exalt my soul by what I may call straightforward intoxication. Thus Shelley and Swinburne come more natural to me than Aeschylus and Shakespeare who intoxicate the reader by transporting him to their wonderland" (273-274). Like Swinburne, Crowley, in Rites of Eleusis, and in most of his best poetry, appropriates a highly evocative style, an enchanting, hypnotic rhythm, facilitated by a smooth metre, and a stress on sound and music, to create the necessary trance-like state. Crowley, however, lacked the discipline and perseverance of Yeats to work towards the perfection of his poetic style, which at least in the bulk

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<sup>10</sup>In fact, Crowley included in his work Swinburne's "Atalanta", "Illicit", and "The Garden of Proserpine".



of his poetry, remained Victorian, that is, rhetorical and verbose. Moreover, as Wilson points out, Crowley "lacks Swinburne's natural talent for verbal music; his poetry never seems to flow freely for more than a line or two. Then he seems to get himself tangled up in language" (Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast 34). In most cases, Crowley's complex web of esoteric symbols and images obstruct the flow of associations which are necessary for the inducement of ecstasy, while his awkward use of diction and lack of musical rhythm alienate the reader. For instance, two stanzas from Crowley's Rite of Jupiter, in which the symbol of the snake predominates as the focus of life and death, baffle the reader with their esoteric symbolism:

Beyond the splendour of the world,  
False glittering of the gold,  
A serpent is in slumber curled  
In wisdom's sacred cold.  
Life is the flaming of that flame.  
Death is the naming of that name.

The forehead of the snake is bright  
With one immortal star,  
Lighting her coils with living light  
To where the nenuphar  
Sleeps for her couch. All darkness dreams  
The thing that is not, only seems. (Rites of Eleusis 100)

The second stanza of the "Song" from The Tale of Archais is a typical example of Crowley's awkward diction and lack of rhythm:

Ere the maiden breasts have panted  
And the sunny shapes  
Flit around to bless the hour,  
Comes men know not what false flower:  
Ere the cup is drained, the wine  
Grows unsweet, that was divine (3-8)

The word "panted", for instance, critically undermines the rhyming scheme of the stanza and obstructs the flow of musical rhythm. Cammell, commenting on the inconsistent quality of Crowley's poetry, notes that "Crowley's verse is always in ratio with the quality of his themes. His finest poetry (as poetry) is always that which treats of loftiest or loveliest matter" (16). Crowley's loftiest matter is, of course, that of magic, and particularly that of magical incantations which induce in the reader "a ritual Magical initiation" (Crowley, The City of God 3). As Crowley insists in The City of God, "a living poem must effect a definite magical excitement-exaltation in the hearer or reader" (3). This is the secret of Crowley's best poetry; it is purely ritualistic and personal, suitable for magical invocations that most probably had a positive or negative magical effect on him, but not necessarily for the rest of the uninitiated. "The Hymn to Pan", "The Holy Books of Thelema", "Rites of Eleusis", "Invocation of Hecate", "Orpheus Invokes the Lords of Khem", and "Sonnets to Night", are examples of this kind of poetry which reveals through passionate and powerfully evocative lyrics the deep religious feeling of the poet, as well as his anguish and desire for spiritual attainment. "Invocation of Hecate" provides a characteristic example of an evocative poem in which Crowley, using figurative language and passionate, evocative images, succeeds in inducing in the reader a hypnotic trance and in successfully communicating his feelings and emotions:

I hear the whining of thy wolves! I hear  
 The howling of the hounds about thy form,  
 Who comest in the terror of thy storm,  
 And night falls faster, ere thine eyes appear  
 Glittering through the mist.  
 O face of woman unkissed  
 Save by the dead whose love is taken ere they wist!  
 Thee, thee I call! O dire one! O divine!  
 I, the sole mortal, seek thy deadly shrine. (Orpheus 3)



## Pound and "the Ocean Flowing Backward"

Pound, familiar with the teachings of the esoteric tradition, believed, like Yeats and Crowley, that humanity had entered a new phase in its evolution. True to the spirit of the new antithetical age, Pound and his fellow Imagistes rejected contemporary English poetic tradition, which was characterized as Pinto observes by a "hollow wordiness . . . [a] reliance on the jingle of rhythm and [on] the mechanical quality of its metre" (154), and sought to create a new poetic form that would reflect the revolutionary spirit of the new age. Pound, as an Imagiste, prescribed for modernist poetics precision, concision, and metrical freedom. Molesworth, in "Alienation and Literary Experimentation", affirms that "Pound objected to what he called 'Victorian slither' by which he meant the tendency to allow one's comfortable and preset attitudes to lead the attention away from what was most pressing and elusive". (1163). He urged fellow poets to "Make it New", that is, to constantly experiment with ideas, form, language.

Pound shares Yeats and Crowley's conviction that the poet is the priest-magician of the new age, whose mission is to proclaim the new religion of the Great Goddess. Pound and the Imagistes, in accordance with the spirit of the chthonic esoteric tradition, declared their objection to any dogma (Pound, "A Retrospect", Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 4) and agreed on three principles which seemed pertinent to the poetic needs of the new age. According to Pound, these three principles are: "1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective. 2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation. 3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome" ("A Retrospect", Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 3). Thus, according to Pound, the Imagiste expresses an idea "with complete clarity and simplicity" using "the smallest possible number of words" ("The Serious Artist" 50). In addition to exhibiting "precision" (48) and "perfect control" (49), the poet must also manage to excite the reader's imagination and intuition, so that the reader can, through an

intuitive leap, grasp the poet's message or meaning and, at the same time, experience an ecstatic revelation. As a poet-priest-magician of the new age, Pound, as an Imagiste, was preoccupied with the problem of how to make the reader intuitively grasp his message or emotion, without any conscious or rational interference on the part of the reader. In other words, Pound and his fellow Imagistes aspired to create a poetic form that would make the language conform to the objective of the poet, which was to initiate the reader into the depths of his collective unconscious, and to induce an ecstasy that would whirl the reader back to the racial memory, and that would make the reader experience directly the divine source. Lindberg, commenting on "Pound's notion of language", insists that it "does not involve the communication of a stable meaning, carried intact from one point or person to another. Instead, through a series of metaphors drawn from the 'new sciences' of electromagnetism and telecommunications, he equates . . . language with 'force', 'movement', and 'power'" (35). In ABC of Reading, Pound, expounding his convictions about the function of the language in the new learning, maintains:

Language is a means of communication. To charge language with meaning to the utmost possible degree, we have, as stated, the three chief means: **I** throwing the object (fixed or moving) on to the visual imagination. **II** inducing emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of the speech. **III** inducing both of the effects by stimulating the associations (intellectual or emotional) that have remained in the receiver's consciousness in relation to the actual words or word groups employed. (63)

What Pound suggests is that language should be charged in such a way that it will stimulate creative imagination. Imagination together with sound, and rhythm, as well as with the emotional correlations or associations induced by the sound and rhythm, should induce in the reader a trance-like state or ecstasy. In an unpublished letter addressed to William Carlos Williams, dated October, 24 1907, Pound notes: "I am interested in art and extacy [sic]. . . , extacy which I would define as the sensation of



the soul in ascent, art as the expression and sole means of transmuting of passing on that exstacy to others" (qtd. in Tryphonopoulos, "Ezra Pound and E. Swedenborg" 13). Pound, in The Spirit of Romance, commenting on the qualities of "good art", maintains that "it is the business of the artist to prevent ennui . . . to relieve, refresh, revive the mind of the reader . . . with some form of ecstasy, by some splendour of thought, some presentation of sheer beauty, some lightning turn of phrase--laughter is no mean ecstasy" (8). Pound affirms that "great art is made to call forth, or create an ecstasy. The finer the quality of this ecstasy, the finer the art" (82).

According to Pound, this magical feeling or ecstasy can be invoked in poetry through the "image". The image functions as a talisman or sigil designed by the artist to transmit, in a flash, the message or feeling that he/she wants to convey to the reader. The image is not simply the transference of the artist's idea to the reader, but also the transmission of a burst of energy to the reader's consciousness, which actually hurls the reader into a vortex of "sudden understanding", enabling him/her to share the ecstatic feeling or revelation that the writer experienced while producing the work of art. In other words, the image becomes a talisman which helps the reader participate in and experience artistic creation itself. Pound, in Gaudier-Brzeska, describes the inspiration that led him to his theory of the image. He recalls an experience he had in Paris, watching some beautiful Parisian faces, whose sight, apparently, caused Pound to experience ecstasy. In his attempt to recapture that beautiful feeling, "to find words for what this had meant to [him]" (Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska 87), Pound formulated the philosophy of Imagism. Pound's dilemma was how to crystallize that particular experienced feeling, retain its beauty, and transmit it to the reader, without losing its original objective substance. In Pound's words, the idea was how "to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective" (89). According to Pound, this "precise instant" is captured by the image or vortex, which is created from the impact between the objective experience and the artist's inner world, and which sigilizes the ecstatic

feeling that the artist seeks to transmit to the reader. Londraville, in "Fenollosa and the Legacy of Stone Cottage", commenting on the function of the image in Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" and noting the difference between the image and the symbol, points out that

the images presented in Pound's poem invite the reader to participate. . . . The reader is invited into the poem to share the process of creation with the poet. . . . The image . . . is different from either allegory or symbol in that it presents without comment, almost photographically, objective archetypal pictures of events and objects, things which cause a poetic vibration by their simple juxtaposition. From this juxtaposition something new emerges which is more than the sum of its parts. (103)

The slight difference between image and symbol, as well as the proximity of Yeats and Pound's thought about the function and use of the image and symbol, is also expounded by Craig, who suggests that Pound's image developed under the influence of Yeats's symbol. According to Craig

the symbol can be 'read' like a word in a dictionary. Pound's image, however, though it seeks to be concrete, intends still to be indefinable, to be as variable as the state of mind it meets in each reader. . . . For Yeats's symbol in its combination of emotional and intellectual is echoed by Pound's Image . . . and while Pound's Image offers us a 'sense of sudden liberation, that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits' (Literary Essays 4), Yeats's symbol not only carries us beyond the conscious mind, but allows the reader to become, in Yeats's occult terminology, 'a part of pure intellect' (Essays and Introductions 161) removed from the ordinary processes of the world. Pound . . . had Yeats's symbol very much in mind as he went about the task of creating a modern movement in which 'the natural object is always the adequate symbol' (Literary Essays 5)' (57-58).

Pound, in "A Retrospect", defines the image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . . [And that] it is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art" (Literary Essays of



Ezra Pound 4). Moreover, Pound, in Gaudier-Brzeska, asserts that "the image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing" (92). What Pound suggests is that the juxtaposition of images that are charged with meaning release the necessary associations or magical correspondences which direct the reader to the "sudden understanding". As Craig indicates, "it was not the 'thing' as fixed object that Pound was after in the image, it was something much more dynamic, something much more like the associationist's conception of provoking--or evoking, another word Pound shares with Yeats--multiplicity from particulars" (59). Thus, Pound's image, like Yeats's symbol, constitutes the key which unlocks the gate to the subconscious through the trance-like state or reverie that it induces and also by the multiple associations which eventually manifest the Great Memory. The evocation of memory forms the landmark in Pound's as well as in Yeats, Crowley, and Graves's, poetry. A matter of primary importance for the poet-prophets of the new age was the invocation of the old gods. Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, through the induced reverie or trance-like state, wanted to initiate the reader into the gnosis or illumination that the Gnostics experienced during the ecstatic moments of their direct communication with the divine. With the evocation of Great Memory, they wanted to activate the archetypal essences which lie dormant in the human subconscious, to make humanity remember the archetypal unity of the soul, lost in modern times. The remembrance of things past is, therefore, the first objective of the modern poet who lives in a fragmentary age in which all traditions are lost, and in which humanity is desperately seeking to find its roots. Craig, commenting on the importance of memory in Pound's poetry and religious metaphysics, presents the element of memory as the most essential link in Pound's poetry and in the reader's understanding of it. Craig suggests that

for Pound, the art of memory kept alive what civilization kept trying to conceal, to cover, to lose a harmony with nature which was symbolized

by the gods and had been the essence of the Eleusinian cults. . . . He can offer no more than a guide to the wisdom of which he is keeper; he opens the way to our descent into the underworld, the past, the depths of ourselves, but it is we who must make the journey. The open poem is turned towards us for its completion, to our memory for its fulfilment. It can never have the kind of coherence of structure we expect of other forms of poetry, because its real totality is composed not on the page but in the fusing of what the poet offers with the multitudinous suggestions it generates in us. (144-145)

Pound's The Cantos is the work par-excellence in which Pound applies his new experimental form. The Cantos can be compared to a Surrealist painting; it is anti-rational, has no logical continuity whatsoever, and thus is rightfully criticized for having no coherence or organic unity. The unity, however, that exists in The Cantos is meta-logical and can only exist in the reader's mind. The Cantos is like the surface of a two-dimensional, magical picture which presents no unity of theme or structure, a picture which when contemplated for some time, though, releases, through a burst of ecstasy, its hidden, three-dimensional reality.

Pound's first canto, in free verse, is indicative of his economy of style. The lively images and the many classical allusions provide a rich background for the reader, who is carried away by the poet in a vortex of associations. The reader enters a timeless poem and follows ecstatically the poet on his journey to the past and the collective unconscious: "The ocean flowing backward, came we then to the place/ Aforesaid by Circe" (3). The associations that the classical allusions inspire, as well as the climactic images, disorientate the reader, who identifies himself/herself with Odysseus. The reader is gradually led to the sudden understanding, insight, or revelation that Tiresias addresses not Odysseus but the poet himself and by association the reader himself/herself, who has taken the journey to the inner self, and has established historical continuity with the past: ". . . and then Tiresias Theban,/ Holding his golden wand, knew me, and spoke first:/ 'A second time? why? man of ill star,/ 'Facing the sunless dead and this joyless region? (4).



## Graves and the Invocation of the Muse

Graves, like Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, considered the poet the priest-magician of the new age and religion and, more specifically, of the Great Goddess. We have already discussed Graves's affiliations with the religious ideas of Yeats and Pound, as well as Graves's ungrounded doubts over Yeats and Pound's poetic abilities. In retrospect, it seems that the four poets possessed the same driving obsession to create a poetic form that would satisfy the demands of the new antithetical age. The poetic form that Graves suggests, in its most important points, matches that of Yeats, Crowley, and Pound.

In "Legitimate Criticism of Poetry: A Talk for Mount Holyoke College, Feb. 6, 1957", Graves, echoing Pound's revolutionary ideas which gave rise to Imagism and Vorticism, insists that "all true poetry is economical in words . . . [that] a good poem is one that makes complete sense; and says all it has to say memorably and economically" (Steps 77-79). Furthermore, Graves complies with Pound's view, expressed in "The Serious Artist", that the poet writes only if he/she has "discovered something--either of life itself or of the means of expression" (Literary Essays of Ezra Pound 56). Similarly, Graves, in "The Making and Marketing of Poetry: A Talk for New York University, Feb. 7, 1958", affirms that a poet "must never write a single line . . . unless she had something important to say" (133); and in "Pulling a Poem Apart: A Talk at the Chicago Arts Centre, Feb. 13, 1958", Graves adds that "the poet's first rule must be never to bore his readers; and his best way of keeping this rule is never to bore himself--which, of course, means to write only when he has something urgent to say" (Steps 148). Graves's poetry is a turning inwards towards the depths of the subconscious. Its purpose is to provide through images, the power of incantation, and the strong hypnotic rhythm, an inspiration, an ecstatic fit, that would release

associations in the reader's mind, make the reader communicate with the collective unconscious, and unite him/her with the Great Goddess.<sup>11</sup>

Graves, as a priest of the new religion, introduces into his poetry a religious element; his poetry becomes "a religious invocation of the Muse" (The White Goddess 14), "an act of faith" ("Observations on Poetry" 4), and seeks to integrate or unify the soul of humanity. For Graves, true poetry is, in a way, a supernatural or supra-logical act of inspiration, achieved when the poet succeeds in reaching his/her intuitive inner self, thus reconciling the conflicting aspects of his/her personality or, in other words, assimilating the opposites of his/her soul. Graves, in "Observations on Poetry (1922-1925) I. The Poetic Trance", commenting on the creation of the ideal poem, claims that "the nucleus of every poem worthy of the name is rhythmically formed in the poet's mind, during a trance-like suspension of his normal habits of thought, by the supra-logical reconciliation of conflicting emotional ideas" (The Common Asphodel: Collected Essays on Poetry (1922-1942) 1). Hoffmann maintains that "the completed poem requires the collaboration of both the intuitive and the critical faculties of the mind, the von Ranke and the Graves in him joined together" (157). Graves believed, like Yeats and Pound, that this assimilation of the opposites could only be accomplished during a hypnagogic state, a state of reverie or trance. Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, the psychiatrist and Cambridge anthropologist who directed Graves to the psychology of the unconscious and to Bachofen's theory of Mother Right in antiquity, notes in Conflict and Dream, that the "production of poetry is closely similar to that of the dream" (qtd. in Graves, Poetic Unreason 99-100). Hoffmann further demonstrates that "the poem like the dream is a symbolic presentation, a resolution of individual emotional conflicts" (157). It is not the ordinary dream, however, that Graves had in mind, but the lucid dream which appears

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<sup>11</sup>According to Vickery, the Great Goddess represents "an extended metaphor for the vicissitudes and exaltation that come to man from the external world of nature and society and from the internal world of his own metabolism and psyche" (Robert Graves and the White Goddess x).



in the twilight state, between sleeping and waking, the dream in which the conscious state is awake and in balance with the subconscious. The true poet, according to Graves, who can claim himself/herself a genius, creates poetry by consciously producing this peculiar ecstatic atmosphere of unity of being which is released during a hypnagogic state. In The Common Asphodel, Graves notes that "there is a trance that comes so close to sleep that what is written in it can hardly be distinguished from ordinary dream-poetry: the rhymes are inaccurate, the phrasing ecstatic, the texture clumsy, the syntax rudimentary, the thought-connections ruled by free-associations, the atmosphere charged with unexplained emotion" ("Observations on Poetry" 1).

The poet who succeeds in producing this magical atmosphere manages to achieve communication with the collective unconscious and reach gnosis or insight by means of an intuitive leap. In "The Case for Xanthippe", Graves insists that the trance state releases intuition (an aspect of the liberated new faculty) which he considers a "natural faculty", and which constitutes "the mind working in a trance at problems which offer only meagre data for their rational solution" (64). Moreover, according to Graves, the poet draws "upon an inexhaustible store of miscellaneous experiences absorbed and filed away on subterranean cellars of memory, and then making a mental leap across the dark void of ignorance" (65). Thus, for Graves, the poet who is capable of producing this trance-like state in order to create poetry is a Muse poet,<sup>12</sup> that is, a poet who has rejected the stigmata of patriarchal domination, such as abstract reasoning and intellectual pride, in favour of the Goddess's induced intuitive trances which suspend abstract reasoning and create a state of unity in the poet's soul.

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<sup>12</sup>The poet who refuses to be possessed and inspired by the Muse, that is, who refuses to acknowledge the superiority of the Goddess, thereby clinging on to old patriarchal values, is, for Graves, an advocate of patriarchal Apollo. Contrary to Muse poetry, Apollonian poetry is "composed in the forefront of the mind: wittily, should the occasion serve, always reasonably, always on a preconceived plan, and derived from a close knowledge of rhetoric, prosody, classical examples, and contemporary fashion. . . . The Apollonian [poet] allows no personal emotions to obtrude, and no unexpected incident to break the smooth musical flow of his verse. The pleasure he offers is consciously aesthetic" ("The Dedicated Poet" 10).

Graves, in Oxford Addresses on Poetry, affirms that Muse poetry "is composed at the back of the mind: an unaccountable product of a trance in which the emotion of love, fear, anger, or grief are profoundly engaged, though at the same time powerfully disciplined: in which intuitive thought reigns supra logically, and personal rhythm subdues metre to its purposes" ("The Dedicated Poet: Oxford Chair of Poetry: Lecture I" 10).

Evocative rhythm, a factor in Graves's poetry as well as in that of Yeats, Crowley, and Pound, contributes to the initiation of the hypnagogic state or trance which eventually leads the reader and the poet into communication with the collective unconscious through the use of climactic images and the associations that they release. Hoffmann, commenting on the importance of rhythm in Graves's poetry, asserts that "Graves's often repeated remarks on the necessity of rhythm as a hypnotizing medium resembles Poe's, as they do Yeats's in 'The Symbolism of Poetry'" (158). And again, Hoffmann insists that Graves considered "the hypnotic quality of rhythm" significant for leading "the reader's logical mind into a trance-state and impose upon him the compelling magic of the poet-witch doctor" (177).

Graves did not follow the example of Pound and the Imagistes who abandoned metre completely in favour of free verse. Graves actually considered metre, particularly accentual metre or loose iambic, important and necessary for the inducement of the trance-like state. Accentual meter, along with a hypnotic incantatory rhythm, visual imagery, and the musical properties of language make the reader experience in an ecstatic inspiratory fit the reality of his/her inner world, and also the feeling of unity induced upon the completion of his/her fragmentary soul.

Appropriating the technique of magical correspondences, a technique that Crowley used extensively in Rites of Eleusis and in most of his evocative religious poetry, Graves, in "Return of the Goddess", a poem whose form strongly echoes Crowley's, manages to create a very powerful magical and mystical atmosphere. The visual imagery, which is supplemented by the symbols of the Great Goddess, such as:



"Milky Way", "slow-revolving Bear", "Frogs from the alder thicket", "An Owl", "the spring", "A gaunt red-legged crane", magically invoke the image of the Great Goddess, and create a peculiar atmosphere which overflows with the presence of the Goddess. The magical correspondences and associations that are released, along with the incantatory rhythm, induce in the reader a trance in which he/she transcends his/her ego and becomes a part of the Goddess.

In closing this chapter I would like to emphasize once more the impact of the esoteric tradition or magic on the poetics of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves. The four poets, well versed in the occult arts, believed in the magical secret that the trained imagination has the power to create any reality out of a mere thought,<sup>13</sup> since, according to the occult maxim, energy always follows thought. The four poets were also aware of the occult law that images or symbols alone can transcend language, pass through the filters of the conscious state and be understood by the subconscious which receives them directly through an intuitive leap. Regardie, in The Golden Dawn, identifies the subconscious with "the latent spiritual self of man" (46), as well as with "a vast subterranean stream of vitality and memory and inspiration" (46). Regardie asserts that this well of memory "can only be reached by means of a symbol" (46). In order to loosen the conscious state's powerful hold on the human consciousness and bring the subconscious closer to the surface, the poet-magician utilizes certain devices, widely used in magic such as rhythm, meter, repetition, and the musical properties of language, which function like a magical mantra<sup>14</sup> and induce

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<sup>13</sup>According to the fifth knowledge lecture of the Golden dawn, "there is also a great mystery that the Adeptus Minor must know, viz.: How the spiritual consciousness can act around and beyond the sphere of Sensation. 'Thought' is a mighty force when projected with all the strength of the lower Will under the guidance of the reasoning faculty and illuminated by the Higher Will" (Regardie, The Golden Dawn 107).

<sup>14</sup>Regardie, in The Tree of Life: A Study in Magic, commenting on theories concerning the function of the mantram, notes that "it is held that when the mantra, is firmly established, and the brain has automatically taken up its liquid accents, all thoughts even that of the mantram are hurled off, and in the mind emptied of all content the mystical experience may ensue" (139).

a hypnagogic state in which the reader achieves unity of being and discovers the stairway to the subconscious. Once the subconscious is touched by creative imagination, the poet-magician and the reader (who experiences through the poem the poet's ecstatic-magical experience), through the magical correspondences or associations released by the talismanic images or symbols, tap the well of memory and evoke the hidden Gnostic deity from the atavistic depths.



## Conclusion

Toynbee observes in A Study of History that a "Time of Troubles" has descended upon Western civilization and that a breakdown of the latter is imminent. According to Toynbee, the breakdown of Western civilization will occur if humanity fails to "ascend from the level of primitive humanity to the height of some superhuman kind of living" (A Study of History: Abridgement of Vol. I-VI 245). Upward points out in "The New Age" that

in no other age since the birth of Christianity has there been manifested the same devouring curiosity about the future, and the same disposition to expect a new earth, if not a new heaven. The astrologers will tell us that this is due to the recurrence of the celestial portent that heralded Christianity. Two thousand years ago the sun, or rather the vernal equinox migrated from the sign of the Lamb into that of the Fish. Today it is passing, or has passed, from the Fish to the Waterman. (357)

On the threshold of a new age, patriarchal Christianity seems unable to help humanity reach the height of its potential evolution. The nineteenth century, as Surette indicates (The Birth of Modernism 36), was expecting a revelation, a new Messiah or avatar that would revitalize the spirit of Western civilization. The pangs of the new age of Aquarius were felt by the creative minority of the late nineteenth century who started to question the validity of the old faith and its ability to cope with the spiritual and metaphysical concerns of modern Western society. Yeats and Crowley express in their autobiographies their conviction that a new age has commenced and that a new religion is on its way to replace patriarchal Christianity. Crowley was convinced that "the Equinox of the Gods had come . . . [and that] a new epoch had begun" (Confessions 394). Yeats, in his typical questioning manner, asks, "Why are these strange souls born everywhere today? with hearts that Christianity, as shaped by history, cannot satisfy. . . . Why should we believe that religion can never bring round its antithesis? Is it true that our air is disturbed as Mallarme said by 'the

trembling of the veil of the temple', or 'that our whole age is seeking to bring forth a sacred book'?" (The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats 189).

Von Hartmann, in The Religion of the Future (1886), commenting on the inability of Christianity to meet humanity's spiritual ends, remarks that "the unsatisfying nature of the old faith is being felt on all sides" (6), and asks, like Yeats, "Are we not, in fact, standing at one of these historical crises when a vast idea, having travelled through all the phases of its Evolution, is necessarily condemned to irrevocable banishment from the stage, in order to leave the space open for other leading ideas to enter in? (17). Hartmann's call is for a new leading religious idea to replace Christianity, an idea embodied in the pantheistic religion of the pagan Hellenic world, the European religion or the "pre-Christian element which Christianity has not stamped out" (Pound, Selected Prose 71) which Pound and Graves evoke in "Statues of Gods" and The White Goddess respectively. This religious idea glorifies the individual spirit and raises humanity to a divine level. Hartmann maintains that "something new must certainly make its appearance, not an unpractical, abstract religiousness, but a new concrete form of Religion, which is founded on rational, yet profoundly spiritual principles. These bases can be applied only by a . . . Pantheism which teaches the immanence of the individual soul in the one Universal Spirit, and the substantial identity of the Universal Essence with its individual manifestation" (6).

Massey, in his essays and in his tedious, abstruse works, criticizes severely the founders of Christianity for suppressing the true facts of the religion's origins, and for creating an inhuman religion which is alien to humanity's spiritual needs, and predicts the end of Christianity and the reappearance of paganism. In The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ, Massey characteristically utters:

Christian religion . . . has divinized a figure of helpless human suffering, a face of pitiful pain; as if there were naught but a great heartache at the core of all things; or the vast Infinite were but a veiled



and sad-eyed sorrow that brings visibly to birth in the miseries of human life. But in the old pagan world men deified the beautiful, the glad; as they will again, upon a loftier pedestal when the fable of this fictitious fall of man, and false redemption by the cloud-begotten God, has passed away like a phantasm of the night, and men awake to learn that they are here to wage ceaseless war upon sordid suffering, remediable wrong and preventable pain; here to put an end to them, not to apotheosize an effigy of sorrow to be adored as a type of the Eternal. For the most beneficent is the most beautiful; the happiest are the healthiest; the most God-like is most glad. The Christian cult has fanatically fought for its false theory, and waged incessant warfare against Nature and Evolution. . . . Eighteen centuries are a long while in the life-time of a lie, but a brief span in the eternity of Truth. The fiction is sure to be found out, and the lie will fall at last! (24)

The creative minority, "the voltmeters and steam-gauges of [the] nation's intellectual life" (Pound, Literary Essays 58), were the first to sense the coming of the new antithetical age, and therefore the first who felt the obligation to crystallize the spirit of the new age, to give it a form and transmit it to the rest of humanity. Upward observes in "The New Age" that "the two centuries which preceded and followed the Christian Era produced an entirely new species of literature, known as apocalyptic. . . . In our day a similar literature has sprung into popularity almost unawares. It is equally without precedent in any former period. . . . The whole of this literature has sprung into existence within a generation, and constitutes one of the most significant of portents" (357). What Upward calls apocalyptic literature corresponds to Vickery's "dissolvment literature" (The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough 13), that is, more specifically, works which attempt to undermine directly or indirectly patriarchal Christianity by revealing its inconsistencies to the spirit of the new age. A classical example of this kind of literature is, according to Vickery, Frazer's The Golden Bough, a work which indirectly undermined the position of Christianity by exposing its connections to and origins in the ancient fertility cults; in other words, Frazer, demythologized the Christian myths. The works of Massey and Nietzsche are also striking examples of dissolvment literature. Massey, the less known of the two,

directly and scathingly confronts patriarchal Christianity, interpreting the Christian myths under the prisma of the esoteric tradition and mythology.

The four poets examined in this study, Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, saturated with the apocalyptic, Messianic spirit of the late nineteenth century and with the teachings of the esoteric tradition (which experienced an extraordinary revival in the late nineteenth century) were particularly influenced<sup>1</sup> by Frazer's The Golden Bough and Nietzsche's revolutionary ethics and philosophy. They endeavoured to bring forth, each in his own way, a poetic and religious manifesto that would express their discontent with the primary, patriarchal spirit; propagate the elements of the new faith which had commenced, as they believed, in the world; and proclaim a new poetic form that would suit the needs of the new antithetical age, a 'formless' form, magically charged with images and symbols that would succeed in communicating with the subconscious state, thus liberating humanity's latent powers and hidden god.

A common denominator among Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves is their deep religiosity. Their liberal disposition, though, as well as their quest for eternal, spiritual values, devoid of any religious, philosophical, and political dogma, prompted them to embark on a symbolic initiation or journey to the depths of their psyche. They came to realize the insufficiency of patriarchal Christianity to fulfil the religious needs of humanity, became conscious of the need of a new creed, and discovered, as Crowley would say, their true will, that is, their life-long mission to communicate the need for a new faith to humanity, and propagate through their works the elements of the new religion. In other words, Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, consciously or unconsciously, became the apostles of the new creed or messengers of the divine spirit, since they believed that they proclaimed the testament of the divine will itself which was striving to develop a new creed that would resurrect or revitalize the suppressed divine element in the human soul. Jung, in his concluding statement in

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<sup>1</sup> Crowley was also influenced by the works of Massey; an influence which Crowley reveals indirectly in Magick (193).



Modern Man in Search of a Soul, commenting on the never-ending ascending nature of the divine will, states that

the living spirit grows and even outgrows its earlier forms of expression; it freely chooses the men in whom it lives and who proclaim it. This living spirit is eternally renewed and pursues its goal in manifold and inconceivable ways throughout the history of mankind. Measured against it, the names and forms which men have given it mean little enough; they are only the changing leaves and blossoms on the stem of the eternal tree. (282)

Maud Gonne, in Scattering Branches, refers to Yeats as the prophet of a new religion and instrument of the divine spirit and observes that "in each generation [the spirit of life] chooses its instruments of expression from among the people, and when it speaks through them, their words and acts have extraordinary significance and extraordinary power" (27). Bearing in mind Jung's statement and Gonne's observation, and considering Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves's ardent belief in the apocalyptic spirit of the age and the teachings of the esoteric tradition, I have suggested, in this thesis, that in their works and particularly in their manifestos, A Vision, The Book of the Law, The Cantos, and The White Goddess respectively, we trace a deliberate attempt of the spirit of life to manifest. This suggestion is in a way corroborated by the fact that Yeats, Crowley, and Graves claimed that their manifestos were the products of an epiphany, that is, they believed that they were in a sense the transmitters of knowledge communicated to them by a supernatural agent. The Cantos, Pound's epic and odyssey into the depths of the self and human existence, shares the mystical, haunting, and obsessive quality of Yeats, Crowley, and Graves's manifestos. The four works manifest and glorify the subconscious, a state associated more or less with the Gnostic divine spirit. The Gnostic god, like the subconscious state, suppressed for two thousand years by the dominance of patriarchal Christianity, seeks liberation and expression using as an instrument the pen of the four writers who become the bearers of light, and the carriers of the suppressed forbidden knowledge.

Kazantzakis, the Greek apocalyptic writer and a contemporary of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, in a discussion with the Chinese writer Emi Siao during his last and final journey to China in 1957, observed that "artists can be divided to three categories. Those who represent and describe the disintegration of the world, the escape artists who seek refuge in the past, and those who aspire to discern the lines of the future civilization and conceive the future shape of humanity [translation mine]" (qtd. in Pouliopoulos 70). The four writers examined in this thesis belong to Kazantzakis's third category. The four writers, classified thus in the apocalyptic tradition, declare in their manifestos the end of the primary patriarchal period and the commencement of the new antithetical one. They attempt to highlight the inconsistencies of patriarchal Christianity, tracing its history back to the solar esoteric tradition (this fraction of the esoteric tradition developed when the patriarchal creeds superseded matriarchy and suppressed the chthonic esoteric tradition, that is, the tradition which remained faithful to the cult of the Great Goddess) and the Church mythologists. The four writers treat in their manifestos "the secret theme", that is, the conflict between the chthonic and solar esoteric traditions, and overtly become adherents to the latter. As adherents to the chthonic esoteric tradition, Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves heralded a pantheistic creed, "the secret religion of esoteric philosophy" (Hartmann 110), which would bring back the unity that the Great Goddess represented in the pagan world of antiquity. They believed in the need for the assimilation of the Apollonian and Dionysian elements, which according to Nietzsche, is responsible for the birth of tragedy in ancient Greece. When we are able to conceive of our life as tragedy (Yeats, Autobiography 116), then we will have achieved, according to Yeats, unity of being or, in esoteric terminology, we will have accomplished the Great Work, that is, we have reconciled the opposites in our psyche, acknowledged our shadow, as Jung would say, or communicated with our Holy Guardian Angel and crossed the Abyss, as Crowley and Yeats would say. It is the assimilation of the opposites which gives birth to the Son of the Thios Anthropos or



Gnostic Christ, that is, to the new divinity which is the symbol of the immortal divine principle in the human soul. The new divinity or archetypal child is present in the manifestos of Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves. In Yeats's A Vision, it appears as the turbulent child of the Altar, in Crowley's The Book of the Law as Horus,<sup>2</sup> the crowned and conquering child, in Pound's The Cantos, as Brimos, the divine child of the goddess Aphrodite, brought forth at the last stage of the Eleusinian mysteries, and in Graves's The White Goddess, as one of the twin sons of the moon goddess, the son of the waning moon, the brother of the star-child, son of the waxing moon. The archetypal child, which is beyond good and evil, represents the synthesis of both elements, and yet, it is considered the child of the mother alone because it exalts the feminine principle suppressed by patriarchal Christianity. Moreover, the child represents the exalted state of consciousness developed in the human psyche after the assimilation of the opposites, a state which brings forth the new divinity or hidden god which resides in the human psyche and forms its immortal principle.

The function of the poet and poetry in the new age that Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves propagated is highly significant. Unlike Plato's Republic, in which the poets were virtually absent, the four poets believed fervently that the poets in the new world order should become naturally the priest-magicians of the new religion as well as the legislators of the world. The poet of the new antithetical age should not think consciously of his/her creation, but should experience rather a fit of automatic writing, that is, a supernatural, obsessive haunting by the Muse or Great Goddess which will give birth to a magical creation that will address mostly the subconscious part of the human psyche. In other words, the poet should become the mouthpiece of the Great Goddess.

As self-declared poets of the new antithetical age, the four poets stress in their poetry the elements of the new antithetical period, which are briefly, belief in poetic

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<sup>2</sup> Horus or Heru-Ra-Ha is, according to Crowley, "a combination of twin gods Ra-Hoor-Khuit, and Hoor-Paar-Kraat" (The Book of the Law 12).

inspiration, intuition, and imagination; belief in individual freedom and in the divine nature of humanity; and a concern for the subconscious rather than the conscious state. Since the exploration of the human psyche or subconscious becomes an imperative need for modern humanity, poetry becomes a means of communication with the inner world, higher self, or Holy Guardian Angel. The poem becomes the gateway to the subconscious or, as Crowley says, "the geyser of the Unconscious" (Olla 11), and language, therefore, constitutes the key. Language, however, is closely related to the conscious state since it addresses more or less the five senses. The problem that the four poets faced was how to use language and form to communicate the feelings, experience, and messages of the artist to the subconscious of the reader--in other words, how to create a three-dimensional picture with a two-dimensional medium which is the language. In the new poetry, form conforms to the new revolutionary principles of the new antithetical age. It becomes formless, loose, no longer restricted to the rules and logical patterns of the primary age; it is charged with talismanic images and symbols which ultimately create, with the help of evocative rhythm, a magical effect on the reader, opening up the magical vistas of the subconscious. In other words, poetry becomes, as Crowley says, a talisman, which brings together the sacred and the profane, a catalyst which unites God and humanity.



## Appendix I

### Alchemy, Gnosticism, and Sexual Magic

The history of the esoteric tradition, if interpreted in psychological and physiological terms, traces, in some way, the development of human consciousness itself. In the evolution of human consciousness, the Mother-Goddess, who formed the primordial divinity in early agricultural societies, represented, more or less, a balanced state of consciousness, a state of innocence, unity, femininity, bliss and, at the same time, ignorance of the functions of the phenomenal world. At the onset of the Iron Age and patriarchal religions, this archetypal unity, typified by the Goddess, vanished, causing a split<sup>1</sup> in the human consciousness that released the analytical or rational powers of the brain, resulting in duality. This differentiation in the human consciousness from a homogeneous or holistic state to a fragmentary one, constitutes, from a psychological point of view, humanity's fall, which was later misunderstood and mythologized in ensuing religions. The esoteric tradition, as it developed from the shamanistic trance flights and the mystery schools of antiquity to the heretic thought of the Gnostics, Templars, and Cathars, is essentially feminine or chthonic in nature. Furthermore, the chthonic tradition reveals a recurrent pattern which, after the Fall, consists in the rediscovery of the divine essence or unity in the human soul, a process which could be precipitated in an initiatory way by the experience of the transcendental gnosis, that is, an ecstatic experience that could symbolically transmute or elevate the base qualities of the human psyche into a pure divine level. The culminating altered state of consciousness would result in palingenesis or the accomplishment of the Great Work, that is, in the ritualistic death of the old

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<sup>1</sup>The split came as a natural consequence in the evolution of human consciousness to enable human beings to cope with the complexities and hazards of the phenomenal world.

personality and the emergence of a new self, conscious of its divine essence and free from the burden of duality.

The accomplishment of the Great Work, or Yeats's unity of being, is identical to the alchemist's "magnum opus" or great work, which is the transformation of base materials to gold. Alchemy is surrounded by a plethora of complicated images and abstruse technical occult terminology, which can be comprehended only in relation to the esoteric chthonic tradition. More specifically, the alchemical process of transubstantiating the "prima materia" to gold reflects Gnosticism's main thesis of transforming the human body of the material evil world to a body of light. In The Spirit Mercurius, Jung points out that Reitzenstein was the first who "recognized the mythological and Gnostic ideas embedded in alchemy" (205). During his own extensive research<sup>2</sup> on alchemy, Jung reached Reitzenstein's conclusion and went a step further by recognizing, on the one hand, the relation of alchemy to his psychology of depth and, on the other, by considering alchemy as the continuation of Gnosticism itself and not just its main successor. Jung, while studying the science of alchemy, apprehended that it "represented the historical link with Gnosticism, and that a continuity, therefore, existed between past and present . . . alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious" (Memories Dreams Reflections 201). In Psychology and Religion, Jung asserts that "in spite of the suppression of the Gnostic heresy, it [Gnosticism] continued to flourish throughout the Middle Ages under the guise of alchemy" (108).

The origins of the hermetic<sup>3</sup> science of alchemy are as elusive as those of Gnosticism. What is certain is that alchemy predates Christianity; that it is somehow connected with the Hellenic and Egyptian mysteries of antiquity; and that it is found

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<sup>2</sup>See Psychology and Alchemy, Alchemical Studies, Mysterium Coniunctionis, as well as his autobiography Memories Dreams Reflections.

<sup>3</sup>According to the esoteric tradition the foundation of alchemy is attributed to the legendary Egyptian priest and sage Hermes Trismegistus.



in Eastern esoteric thought. The philosophical and esoteric implications of alchemy were well known to the ancient Greeks. Taylor asserts that the alchemical body of the ancient Greek alchemists reveals that "these men were not really interested in making gold and were not in fact talking about gold at all. The practical chemist examining these works feels like a builder who should try to get a practical information from a work on Freemasonry" (A Survey of Greek Alchemy 178). Eliade attributes the emergence of alchemy in the Christian world to the

result of a meeting between the esoteric current represented by the Mysteries, neo-Pythagoreanism and neo-Orphism, astrology, the "wisdom of the East" in its various revelations, Gnosticism etc. (this current was especially the concern of cultivated people, of the intelligentsia), and the popular tradition, which were the guardians of trade secrets and magical and technical systems of great antiquity. (A History of Religious Ideas 301)

More specifically, Eliade relates the origin of alchemical philosophical thought to the esoteric chthonic tradition which permeated the mysteries of the Great Goddess. Eliade declares that "it is probably the old conception of the Earth Mother bearing minerals as embryos in her womb that crystallized belief in an artificial transmutation, that is, a transmutation performed in a laboratory" (A History of Religious Ideas 303). Illustrating further the relation between the symbolic perspective of the alchemical transmutation and the ceremonies performed in the mysteries of antiquity, Eliade affirms that "the alchemist treats matter as the divinity was treated in the Mysteries: the mineral substances 'suffer', 'die', and 'are reborn' to another mode of being, that is, transmuted" (304).

In alchemical terms, the result of transmutation, which constitutes the accomplishment of the magnum opus, is the Philosopher's Stone. In alchemy, the stone functions as a catalyst which finally enables the alchemist to transform base metals into gold. It is also considered the elixir of life and the substance that cures all diseases, therefore conferring immortality. The nature of this stone is quite

paradoxical. Cavendish defines the Philosopher's Stone as "a stone . . . [that] is not a stone; it exists everywhere in nature but is ignored or despised, it is unknown and yet known to everyone, it is made of fire and water, it is a fluid without weight, it comes from God and does not come from God" (An Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained 23). Jung, in Psychology and Religion, identifies the Philosopher's Stone with the "divine hermaphroditus, the Second Adam,<sup>4</sup> the glorified, incorruptible body of resurrection, or the human luminum, the illumination of the human mind, or sapientia" (111). Furthermore, Jung asserts that "in East and West alike, alchemy contains at its core the Gnostic doctrine of the Anthropos and by its very nature has the character of a peculiar doctrine of redemption" (The Spirit Mercurius 205). Thus, in the mystical esoteric language, the Philosopher's Stone is identified with the Gnostic Christ, the divine catalyst that exists in the human psyche, and whose discovery allows human beings to unite with the divine primeval source or 'Anthropos'. In other words, the task of the alchemist philosopher is to excite or initiate this particular state of divine consciousness, symbolized by the Gnostic Christ or Son of Anthropos, that is, the immortal principle in human beings. The excitation of this state or creation of the Philosopher's Stone requires, however, as Cavendish claims, the "alchemical marriage" or the assimilation of "fire and water", or of the "Red Lion" and the "White Eagle", or the "King" and the "Queen," or the "Sun" and the "Moon," which if successful enables humanity to attain that desired state of consciousness and metamorphose the material body into a body of light. According to Eliade, the alchemical marriage or ieros gamos (sacred marriage) results in the "mystical union between [the] two cosmological principles" (305), that is, in the assimilation of

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<sup>4</sup>The first Adam is the divine Anthropos, that is, the supreme deity of the Gnostics and corresponds astronomically with the Great Bear, "the symbol of the great creation" (Hippolytus Philosophumena iv 48). The second Adam is associated with the Gnostic Christ, or the son of the Mother alone, and is identified with the Lesser Bear "the image of the second, created by God, creation" (iv 48).



opposites and in the birth of the child<sup>5</sup> that encompasses the two yet is, at the same time, neutral to both. Cavendish, in a language embellished with sexual overtones, describes the Mass<sup>6</sup> of the Holy Ghost, illustrating further the sexual nature of alchemy:

The pure gold or Amrita<sup>7</sup>, the dew of immortality, which is the object of the [alchemical] operation, is produced by mingling two substances, 'the serpent or the Blood of the Red Lion', whose source is the Athanor<sup>8</sup>, and 'the Tears or the Gluten of the White Eagle', which is housed in Cucurbite.<sup>9</sup> Through the stimulus of warmth and spiritual Fire to the Athanor there should be a transfer, an ascent of the Serpent<sup>10</sup> from that instrument into the Cucurbite, used as a retort. The alchemical marriage or the mingling of the two streams of force in the retort causes at once the chemical corruption of the Serpent in the menstruum of the Gluten, this being the solve part of the general alchemical formula of solve et coagula. Hard upon the corruption of the Serpent and his death, arises the resplendent Phoenix . . . (26)

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<sup>5</sup>For the significance and relation of the child archetype to Yeats's "turbulent child of the altar," and Crowley's "crowned and conquering child", see the particular section in this study of "The Child Archetype".

<sup>6</sup>Cavendish's description is based on Regardie's elaboration on the Gnostic Mass, which in turn is based on the testimony of the sixteenth century alchemist Heinrich Khunrath. Grant, concerning the Mass of the Holy Ghost, points out that "the Gnostics called this rite [which treated orgasm as "a sacred rite or working"] the Mass of the Holy Ghost, and the male-female essences--expressed in their gross forms--were symbolized by bread and wine. The Gnostic Mass is therefore an eidolon of the metaphysical ecstasy, or orgasm, which is veiled beneath the symbol of the Holy Ghost, of which the dove (the bird of Venus) is the special vehicle" (Magical Revival 39).

<sup>7</sup>According to Grant, Amrit in Sanscrit is "ambrosia or nectar. In magical terminology, Amrit is the distillation of a Kala (q.v.) or Ray, which, when absorbed, inebriates with its divine and bliss- conferring flavour" (Magical Revival 215)

<sup>8</sup>Athanor, according to Cavendish, is a "sealed furnace" (26), indicating, probably, the womb.

<sup>9</sup>Cavendish describes Cucurbite as "a circular crystalline vessel justly proportioned to the quality of its contents" (An Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained 26), indicating thus the male generative organ.

<sup>10</sup>The ascent of the Serpent might also indicate the rise of Kundalini which, according to occult terminology, is "the Magical Power in the human organism, represented as a coiled serpent sleeping at the base of the spine until awakened by Will (Thelema)" (Grant, Magical Revival 220).

The element of sexual polarity in Cavendish's description is obvious. In fact, most of the alchemical body is embroidered with sexual imagery; as Christopher Macintosh declares, "given a sexual interpretation, many of the European alchemical texts seem to make sense" (The Rosicrucians 80).

Furthermore, European alchemical texts manifest the tantric element of Eastern Chinese alchemy. Jung, in Religious Ideas in Alchemy, using as an example Wei Po-Yang's "An Ancient Chinese Treatise on Alchemy" (dated from the middle of the second century), declares that Po-Yang's treatise "displays fundamental similarities with Western alchemy" (343). Jung does not specify these similarities, but it is almost certain that they are sexual in nature, since Chinese alchemy is closely related to the physiology of sex. Francis King affirms that "Chinese alchemy was . . . concerned with bodily processes involving sexual secretions" (Tantra, the Way of Action 62). Grant more explicitly asserts that "the mysterious science of alchemy approximates closely to the Tantric doctrine of the Kalas,<sup>11</sup> and it contains concepts of a parallel nature. . . . The exudation and imbibition of magical kalas inherent in human fluids is the main subject of this ancient science, known in India as the Sri Vidya" (Magical Revival 128).

Crowley was certainly familiar with the tantric side of alchemy, which he exercised constantly and methodically during the last thirty years of his life. In a letter to Norman Mudd, dated 1924, Crowley asserts that "the alchemist's metals were living substances" (qtd. in Grant, Magical Revival 128). In his Confessions, Crowley hints at the tantric element utilized in the Order of the Temple of the East<sup>12</sup> and its

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<sup>11</sup>Grant states that "in the Tantras . . . [Kalas] refer specifically to the vaginal vibrations brought on by an intensification of ritual procedure during the performance of the Kaula rites [rites appropriating the sexual polarity]" (Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God 212).

<sup>12</sup>Crowley was appointed chief of the British section of the O.T.O in 1912 by the German Outer Head Theodor Reuss; when the latter died in 1922, Crowley became the general Outer Head of the Order.



relation to alchemy:<sup>13</sup> "In the bosom of the Sanctuary of the Gnosis of the O.T.O is cherished a magical formula . . . for attaining any desired object. It is, however, peculiarly appropriate to the principal operations of alchemy, most of all the preparation of the Elixir of Life and the Universal Medicine" (807).

We should emphasize, however, that the sexual element in alchemy and sexual magic was not an end in itself but functioned as a means of initiating or exciting that particular state of consciousness that could bring forth the new divinity or accomplishment of the Great Work. Crowley and Yeats liken the process of alchemy to the process of hermetic initiation. In fact, both alchemy and initiation constitute one single process where

the First Matter is a man, that is to say, a perishable parasite, bred of the earth's crust, crawling irritably upon it for a span, and at last returning to the dirt whence he sprang. The process of initiation consists in removing his impurities, and finding in his true self an immortal intelligence to whom matter is no more than the means of manifestation. (Crowley, Magick 185)

In a comment reminiscent of Crowley's Gnostic spirit, Yeats remarks in Rosa Alchemica that "alchemy was the gradual distillation of the contents of the soul until they were ready to put off the mortal and put on the immortal" (283-84). Yeats's work<sup>14</sup> is actually marked by alchemy, since he dreamed of transmuting "life into art, and a cry of measureless desire for a world made wholly of essences" (267).

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<sup>13</sup>For further elucidation of alchemy in relation to Crowley, see particularly chapter 20 of Crowley's Magick in Theory and Practice, as well as The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O edited by Francis King.

<sup>14</sup>Yeats's A Vision can particularly be considered an alchemical work since its main objective is the unravelling of the multifold aspects of the human personality and the discovery of the body of light, the Philosopher's Stone, or new divinity, which is the divine essence or immortal principle in human beings.

## Appendix II

### Occult Hermeneutics and Astronomy

In ancient times, heavenly bodies were considered gods or were thought to be controlled by gods;<sup>1</sup> their worship constituted the foundation of all ancient religions. Furthermore, in the minds of the ancients, time was related to divinity, and was measured by the periodical progression of the position and view of the celestial bodies. Therefore, the science of astronomy from its very beginnings was closely associated with the esoteric tradition, since the study of the movements of the heavenly bodies was undertaken exclusively by priests. Mackey, in A Lexicon of Freemasonry, maintains that

the earliest inhabitants of the earth must have been attracted by the splendour of the glorious firmament above them, and would have sought in the motions of its luminaries for the readiest and most certain method of measuring time. With Astronomy the system of Freemasonry is intimately connected. From that science many of our most significant emblems are borrowed. The lodge itself is a representation of the world; it is adorned with the images of the sun and moon, whose regularity and precision furnish a lesson of wisdom and prudence; its pillars of strength and establishment have been compared to the two columns which the ancients placed at the equinoctial points as supporters of the arch of heaven; the blazing star [Sirius] which was among the Egyptians a symbol of Anubis or the dog-star, whose rising foretold the overflowing of the Nile, shines in the east; while the clouded canopy is decorated with the beautiful Pleiades. (49)

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<sup>1</sup>Lockyer, in The Dawn of Astronomy, affirms that "in Babylonia it is a very remarkable thing that from the beginning of things . . . the sign of God was a star. We find the same idea in Egypt: in some of the hieroglyphic texts three stars represented the plural 'gods'" (4). Moreover, Abetti, in The History of Astronomy, testifies that "in the minds of all peoples astronomy . . . has always been closely connected with religious tradition, so closely that astronomical phenomena were often confused with religious events, the one confirming or even predicting the other. . . . Astronomy is the science most closely allied to religion" (3-4).



Pike, in Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, referring to the symbolism of Egyptian mythology and religion, further notes that "nothing of this recital was historical; but the whole was an allegory or sacred fable, containing a meaning known only to those who were initiated into the mysteries. All the incidents were astronomical, with a meaning still deeper, lying behind that explanation, and so hidden by a double veil" (379).

According to the esoteric tradition, during the period of the star-cults in Egypt, prior to the lunar and the later solar reckoning of time, and long before patriarchy commenced, the constellation of the Great Bear was the earliest mode of rendering time. The Great Bear or Ursa Major, the most prominent constellation in the northern hemisphere, with her seven most luminary stars, became the genitrix, the Mother-Goddess, the "bringer forth of the primal birth of time" (Massey, Natural Genesis, II: 17). Furthermore, Massey argues that "the beginning of time in heaven is based on the number and the name of seven on account of the starry demonstrators. The seven stars as they turned round annually kept pointing as it were with a fore-finger of the right hand, and describing a circle in the upper and lower heaven" (Natural Genesis, II: 312). The Great Mother of the Seven Stars, or Typhon in Egyptian mythology, pointed at her son, the star Sirius, in the southern hemisphere. The rising of Sirius<sup>2</sup> or Anubis or the dog-star, the principal star of the constellation of Canis major, commenced the sacred year of the Egyptians "on the first of the month Taht, or Tehuti, equivalent to our twentieth of July" (Massey, Natural Genesis, II: 294). Grant, an authority on occult lore, points out in The Magical Revival that

time was first reckoned with reference to the circumpolar stars of Ursa Major or Typhon. She was the Goddess of the North. She was the

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<sup>2</sup>The rising of Sirius just before the rising of the sun at the summer solstice marked also the inundation of Nile. According to Seymour, "as the Nile was about to rise, the star Sirius could be seen rising in the east, just a short while before the Sun itself rose. Such a rising is called a heliacal rising and it follows a period of invisibility, when Sirius is virtually rising and setting with the Sun and so could not be seen" (43).

Primal Goddess of the Seven Stars which were considered as her spirits, souls, or sons. These seven were manifested by the first-born son . . . Set in the southern constellation of the Great Dog, of which Sirius is the brightest star. He was the primal God of Five or Light in the South, and his image was the pyramid or triangle. He concentrated the Eight or Height of Heaven in the South, while his mother reigned supreme in the lower heaven of the North. He manifested her light and opened the year by announcing the inundation of the Nile which occurred at the Summer solstice, when the sun entered the sign of the Lion. (64)

Egyptologists testify that the Egyptian year originally had 360 days, consisting of twelve months of thirty days each. Therefore, we assume that right after the progression of stellar cults or alongside them, lunar cults developed, in which the moon became the principal mode of reckoning time. Thus, the Moon Goddess became the Great Goddess and replaced the Goddess of the Seven Stars. Massey indicates that "the genitrix of the first heptanomis (Typhon of the seven stars) now took a lunar character, or was succeeded by a lunar representation of time" (Natural Genesis, II: 313). Specifically, the full moon represented the Great Mother,<sup>3</sup> while the waxing and waning moon represented her twin sons.<sup>4</sup> Lockyer, hinting at the twin sons of the Goddess in Egyptian mythology, affirms that "with regard to Horus, it is necessary to discriminate since there were two distinct gods--Horus in Northern and Horus in Southern Egypt, and *Horus of the south was the elder of the two* [author's italics]" (349).

During the stellar and lunar period when matriarchy reigned, the twin sons of the Goddess, Sut or Set, the dark child of the waning moon, and Horus, the horned child of light or of the waxing moon, alternated equally in her favour (Graves, The

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<sup>3</sup>The Mother Goddess was also known as Goddess-Fifteen, that is, the Goddess of the full moon.

<sup>4</sup>The lunar myth of the twins also finds expression in Christian mythos. Christ is identified with the grown up child or horned child of light (identified with the Father), while John the Baptist becomes the dark child, the child of the mother alone. John the Baptist, the prodromos, that is, the child who gives way to or prepares the way for the star-child, is Lucifer or Satan, the child who bears witness to the light.



White Goddess 388). The dark child<sup>5</sup> naturally became the child of the mother alone, while the star-child or child of light was later identified with the child of the father or lover of its mother.

For about three thousand years, the commencement as well as the length of the Egyptian year was decided by the heliacal rising of Sirius, a rising which coincided with the inundation of the Nile and the summer solstice. However, the ancient priests responsible for the measurement of time discovered that the constellation of the Great Bear, the star Sirius, and the moon were not the true tellers of time. The priests eventually discovered that the stars were not fixed and thus reliable bodies in the sky, but were slowly changing their position. Lockyer asserts that "the star [Sirius] to which they trusted to warn them of the beginning of a new year was like all stars subject to the effects brought about by the precession of the equinoxes. Not for long could it continue to rise heliacally either at a solstice or a Nile flood" (253). Similarly, the ancient Egyptian priests discovered that the 360-day lunar year did not correspond to the exact solar year of 365.25 days, that every lunar year was losing 5.25 days. Lockyer observes that "as each year dropped 5.25 days, it is evident that in about seventy years ( $365.25/5.25$ ) a cycle was accomplished, in which New Year's Day swept through all the months. The same month (so far as its name was concerned) was now in the inundation time, now in the sowing time, and so on. Of fixed agricultural work for such months as these there could be none" (254). Even before the abandonment of the stellar and lunar reckoning of time, the observation of the solstices and the equinoxes probably led the ancient priests to correct the 360-day

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<sup>5</sup>Massey, commenting on the twins and particularly on the astronomical origin of the birth of the dark child, explains in "Luniolatry: Ancient and Modern", that "the womb of the mother being the lunar orb in which the child in embryo can be seen in course of growth . . . was represented as being transparent with the child on view. . . . The birth of the dark one of the mother-moon's two children depends upon that part of the lunar orb which is turned away from the sun, being dimly seen from the light reflected from our earth. As the light began to lessen, and the orb became opaque, there was an obvious birth of the dark part of the moon! That was the birth of the little dark one of the lunar twins" (19).

year by adding five more days, the epacts or epagomenai.<sup>6</sup> But they found out that there was still a difference of one day every four years. According to Lockyer, the priests of ancient Egypt "with perfectly orientated temples . . . must have soon found out that their festival at the Summer Solstice . . . did not fall precisely on the day of the New Year, because, if 365 days had exactly measured the year, that flash of bright sunlight would have fallen into the sanctuary just as it did 365 days before. But what they must have found was that, after an interval of four years, it did not fall on the first day of the month, but on the day following it" (250-51).

Inevitably the lunar reckoning of time gave way to the more exact solar reckoning; the sun proved to be a truer teller of time. Sun worship, which coincided with patriarchy, superseded the stellar and moon worship of matriarchy. The solar cults disregarded the chthonic esoteric tradition, which was based on the star and lunar reckoning of time, and repudiated the child of the mother alone or the child of the waning moon, that is, Satan or Lucifer, the dark child, identifying it with evil; instead, they deified the child of the father or child of the waxing moon. In solar Christianity, Christ, the representative of patriarchy, is the horned child of the waxing moon; according to the Gnostic tradition, he repudiated his mother, suppressed his twin brother (the female principle), and identified himself with the Father.

With the commencement of patriarchy, the conflict between the adherents of the chthonic esoteric tradition (who remained faithful to the mysteries of the Goddess) and the solar esoteric tradition (who accepted patriarchy) began in earnest, and secret

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<sup>6</sup>The Greek word "epagomenai" means "now-intercalated" or "now in-duced" (Mead's translation). For a mythological rendering of the historical fact of the correction of the 360-day year, see Plutarch's Considering the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris, and particularly "The Mystery Myth", in which Plutarch narrates that "when Rhea secretly united with Kronos, Helios on sensing it imprecated her not to bring forth in month or year. That Hermes, being in love with the Goddess, came to conjunction [with her]; then playing draughts against Selene [moon], and winning the seventieth of each of the lights, he con-duced from all five days and in-duced them into the three hundred and sixty [days]--which Egyptians call the 'now-induced', and keep as birthdays of the Gods [Mead's translation]" (qtd. in Mead, Thrice-Greatest Hermes 194).



history was born. Lockyer points out that "one of the longest-lasting astro-theological strife in Egypt was the fight for supremacy between the priests of Amen and the priests of Set" (301), while Grant, in Cults of the Shadow, implies that this strife eventually shaped later religions and still influential today: "it was the conflict between the devotees of the sun and those of the moon and stars that determined the nature of all later cults, however civilized their final form" (50). Mackey, commenting on the role of solar and lunar worship in freemasonry, hints at the significance of the concealed father or sun behind the sun or sun of the mother alone (star Sirius) in the Masonic ritual, and thus implies the supremacy of the stellar, chthonic esoteric tradition over the solar one:

Moon-worship was as widely disseminated as sun-worship. Masons retain her image in their rites because the lodge is a representation of the universe, where as the sun rules over the day, the moon presides over the night; as the one regulates the year, so does the other the months, and as the former is the king of the starry hosts of heaven, so is the latter their queen; but both deriving their heat, and light, and power from him, who, as a third and the greatest light, the master of heaven and earth, controls them both. (309)

The dark child of the Moon Goddess or Son of the Goddess of the Seven Stars, is Yeats's child of the mother alone or Turbulent Child of the Altar, Crowley's Crowned and Conquering Child, Pound's child of the goddess Aphrodite brought forth in the last stage of the Eleusinian mysteries, and Graves's Star-child's brother, the "goat" that Christianity neglected, Lucifer or Satan. According to Yeats, Crowley, Pound, and Graves, the coming of the dark child in the religious consciousness of the people will mark the commencement of a new age, a period which is astronomically predicted by the precession of the equinoxes. Thus, the occult belief in the coming of the new antithetical period which is manifested in Yeats's A Vision, Crowley's The Book of the Law, Pound's The Cantos, and Graves's The White Goddess, is not based only on metaphysical speculation, but also on astronomical observation.

The cycle of precession was known to ancient Egyptian priests and, according to their calculations, lasted for 25,920 years.<sup>7</sup> As the earth revolves around the sun it exhibits a spinning top gyration which takes 25.795 years to be completed. This tilting motion is called the precession of the earth's axis, and causes the slow but steady displacement of the northern pole, so that different stars at different times play the role of the polar star.<sup>8</sup> The precession has as a result the displacement of the equinoctial points, the cross-sections of the ecliptic with the equator. Thus, the precession or the tilting motion of the earth's axis causes the precession of the equinoxes, that is, the position of the two equinoctial points moves in relation to the positions of the stars and constellations in the heavenly sphere. In 25,795 years, the equinoctial points trace out one complete revolution on the ecliptic, moving from the east to the west, that is, counter to the sun's movement on the ecliptic. In other words, the vernal equinox moves backwards against the background stars and constellations on a scale of about one sign every 2,000 years. According to Abbot, "when the constellations were first named [by the Babylonians], the March [vernal] equinox occurred when the sun was in the direction towards the constellation Aries" (55). Two thousand years after that event, the vernal equinox came in the sign of Pisces, an incident which coincided with the birth of Christ; today two thousand years after the birth of Christ, the vernal equinox rises under the sign of Aquarius.

From an esoteric point of view, the precession of the equinoxes explains most Biblical and occult myths, such as the birth of the mythical Christ,<sup>9</sup> the coming of the Messiah, the tradition of the Coming One, and the end of the world or Deluge. In his essay "The Esoteric Teaching on the Zodiac", Brodie-Innes, Yeats's fellow initiate into the Order of the Golden Dawn, and at one time, together with Dr. Felkin, head of

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<sup>7</sup>The cycle of precession was first observed by the ancient Greek astronomer Hipparchus in the second century BC., and its actual duration is 25,795 years.

<sup>8</sup>The star "α-Draconis", played the role of the polar star 5,000 years ago. Today and until 3,000 AD., polar star is "α-Ursa Minor".

<sup>9</sup>According to the esoteric tradition, the birth of Christ was astronomical "and solely related to the cycles of time" (Massey, "The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ" 8).



the Stella Matutina Temple, extensively comments on the esoteric importance of the precession of the equinoxes:

The glyph of the Supreme God at anytime over the face of the world being formed from that sign which the sun occupies at the vernal equinox . . . this point is continually moving backward around the zodiac. Whatever we take as our given sign which the sun occupies at the vernal equinox, at that point of time 2.000 years later the sun will occupy the previous sign. Thus about 4.000 BC. the sun at the vernal equinox was in the sign of Taurus, and then we find the bull god everywhere; and the bull was the sign which was everywhere worshipped. . . . The bull symbol in the course of time, and about the period when Moses was born, gives way to the symbol before it, Aries . . . and then the lamb or the ram comes to be worshipped all over the world. And when I say "worship", I don't mean literally but that the lamb or ram symbol is taken as the glyph of the Supreme god. . . . At the time of Christ the sun passed out of the constellation of Aries at the vernal equinox and came into the constellation of Pisces . . . now we are coming just now into the sign of Aquarius. "There shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water", said Christ . . . The development of intuition, the female power is a noticeable fact all over the world . . . [as well as] interest in all mystic or occult subjects. (The Sorcerer and His Apprentice, Unknown Hermetic Writings of Mathers and J.W. Brodie-Innes 186)

Similarly, Massey, in "The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ", asserts that the precession of the equinoxes proves in a way that the founder of Christianity did not exist as a historic personality, and that the prophesy of the Coming One or the Messiah was purely astronomical. Massey maintains that "in the course of precession, about 255 BC., the vernal birthplace passed into the sign of the Fishes, and the Messiah who had been represented for 2,155 years by the Ram or Lamb, and previously for other 2,155 years by the Apis Bull, was now imaged as the Fish" (7). Furthermore, Massey, in "The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ", insists that the "prophesy of fulfilment was solely astronomical and the Coming One as the Christ who came in the end of an age, or of the world, was but a metaphorical figure, a type of time from the first, which never could take form in historic personality . . . the

history in our Gospels is from beginning to end the identifiable story of the Sun-God, and the Gnostic Christ who never could be made flesh" (9-10).

Two thousand years after the birth of Christ, "Mysterious Time is once more big with child and labouring to bring forth her twentieth babe"<sup>10</sup> (Mead, Fragments of A Faith Forgotten 3). The twentieth child was brought forth when the colure of the vernal equinox passed into the sign of Aquarius, a sign which is "purely Human . . . the sign of MAN, the water-bearer or bearer of the Waters of life in his own person" (Achad 11). Frater Achad, Crowley's disciple and student, expresses in The Egyptian Revival, the generally accepted belief among occult circles that in the new age of Aquarius, the Equinox of the Gods would manifest the Gnostic Christ in the human soul, that is, it would enable humanity to achieve the Great Work, cross the abyss of the boundless self, and embrace the Gnostic Christ, the divine, immortal principle of the human soul. Moreover, Achad states that the coming of the new antithetical period of Aquarius would reinstate the stellar religion of the Goddess of the Seven Stars and her only Son Sirius. According to Achad, the new age "is the Aeon of the foundation of the kingdom upon Earth, characterized by the Incarnation of God in the Heart of every Man, Women, and Child" (59); "once again in this Aeon we are able to recognize the Great Mother of the Stars, and to discover the secret of the Lost Father" (95).

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<sup>10</sup>For Crowley, Horus, the new baby, was born in 1904, when he received The Book of the Law; Yeats, while writing his own manifesto A Vision, was informed by the control that the birth of the new Messiah or Avatar or the new Christ is set at 2.100 AD.



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